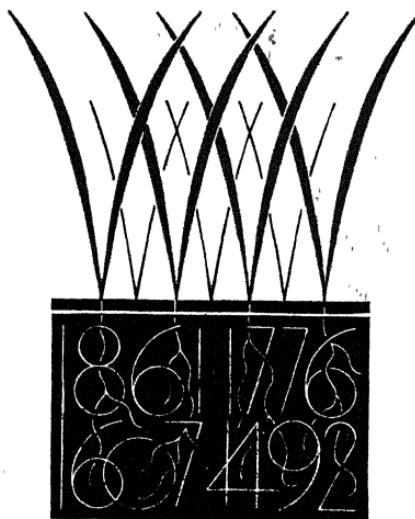


LEAVES  
of GRASS  
by WALT WHITMAN  
Illustrated by ROCKWELL KENT



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# Walt Whitman

*Come, said my soul,  
Such verses for my body let us write, (for we are one,)  
That should I after death invisibly return,  
Or, long, long hence, in other spheres,  
There to some group of mates the chants resuming,  
(Tallying Earth's soil, trees, winds, tumultuous waves,)  
Ever with pleas'd smile I may keep on,  
Ever and ever yet the verses owning—as, first, I here and now,  
Signing for soul and body, set to them my name.*





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## PREFACE TO 1855 EDITION OF “LEAVES OF GRASS”

A MERICA does not repel the past or what it has produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions . . . accepts the lesson with calmness . . . is not so impatient as has been supposed that the slough still sticks to opinions and manners and literature while the life which served its requirements has passed into the new life of the new forms . . . perceives that the corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house . . . perceives that it waits a little while in the door . . . that it was fittest for its days . . . that its action has descended to the stalwart and wellshaped heir who approaches . . . and that he shall be fittest for his days.

The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast masses. Here is the hospitality which forever indicates heroes. . . . Here are the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves. Here the performance disdaining the trivial unapproached in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings and the push of its perspective spreads with crampless and flowing breadth and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance. One sees it must indeed own the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows from the ground or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish or men beget children upon women.

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies . . . but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors . . . but always “most in the common people. Their manners speech dress friendships—the freshness and candor of their physiognomy—the picturesque looseness of their carriage . . . their deathless attachment to free-

dom—their aversion to anything indecorous or soft or mean—the practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states—the fierceness of their roused resentment—their curiosity and welcome of novelty—their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy—their susceptibility to a slight—the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors—the fluency of their speech—their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul . . . their good temper and openhandedness—the terrible significance of their elections—the President's taking off his hat to them not they to him—these too are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it.

The largeness of nature or the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen. Not nature nor swarming states nor streets and steamships nor prosperous business nor farms nor capital nor learning may suffice for the ideal of man . . . nor suffice the poet. No reminiscences may suffice either. A live nation can always cut a deep mark and can have the best authority the cheapest . . . namely from its own soul. This is the sum of the profitable uses of individuals or states and of present action and grandeur and of the subjects of poets.—As if it were necessary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall behind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery and what has transpired since in North and South America were less than the small theatre of the antique or the aimless sleepwalking of the middle ages! The pride of the United States leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture and all the magnitude of geography or shows of exterior victory to enjoy the breed of fullsized men or one fullsized man unconquerable and simple.

The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as contributions . . . he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake. His spirit responds to his country's spirit . . . he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes. Mississippi with annual freshets and changing chutes, Missouri and Columbia and Ohio and Saint Lawrence with the falls and beautiful masculine Hudson, do not embouchure where

they spend themselves more than they embouchure into him. The blue breadth over the inland sea of Virginia and Maryland and the sea off Massachusetts and Maine and over Manhattan bay and over Champlain and Erie and over Ontario and Huron and Michigan and Superior, and over the Texan and Mexican and Floridian and Cuban seas and over the seas off California and Oregon, is not tallied by the blue breadth of the waters below more than the breadth of above and below is tallied by him. When the long Atlantic coast stretches longer and the Pacific coast stretches longer he easily stretches with them north or south. He spans between them also from east to west and reflects what is between them. On him rise solid growths that offset the growths of pine and cedar and hemlock and liveoak and locust and chestnut and cypress and hickory and limetree and cottonwood and tuliptree and cactus and wildvine and tamarind and persimmon . . . and tangles as tangled as any canebreak or swamp . . . and forests coated with transparent ice and icicles hanging from the boughs and crackling in the wind . . . and sides and peaks of mountains . . . and pasturage sweet and free as savannah or upland or prairie . . . with flights and songs and screams that answer those of the wildpigeon and highhold and orchard-oriole and coot and surf-duck and redshouldered-hawk and fish-hawk and white-ibis and indian-hen and cat-owl and water-pheasant and qua-bird and pied-sheldrake and blackbird and mockingbird and buzzard and condor and nightheron and eagle. To him the hereditary countenance descends both mother's and father's. To him enter the essences of the real things and past and present events—of the enormous diversity of temperature and agriculture and mines—the tribes of red aborigines—the weatherbeaten vessels entering new ports or making landings on rocky coasts—the first settlements north or south—the rapid stature and muscle—the haughty defiance of '76, and the war and peace and formation of the constitution . . . the union always surrounded by blatherers and always calm and impregnable—the perpetual coming of immigrants—the wharf-hem'd cities and superior marine—the unsurveyed interior—the loghouses and clearings and wild animals and hunters and trappers . . . the free commerce—the fisheries and whaling and gold-digging—the endless gestation of new states—the convening of Congress every December, the members duly coming up from all climates and the uttermost parts . . . the noble character of the young mechanics and of all free American workmen and work-women . . . the general ardor and friendliness and enterprise—the perfect equality of the female with the male . . . the large amative-

ness—the fluid movement of the population—the factories and mercantile life and laborsaving machinery—the Yankee swap—the New-York firemen and the target excursion—the southern plantation life—the character of the northeast and of the northwest and southwest—slavery and the tremulous spreading of hands to protect it, and the stern opposition to it which shall never cease till it ceases or the speaking of tongues and the moving of lips cease. For such the expression of the American poet is to be transcendent and new. It is to be indirect and not direct or descriptive or epic. Its quality goes through these to much more. Let the age and wars of other nations be chanted and their eras and characters be illustrated and that finish the verse. Not so the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has vista. Here comes one among the wellbeloved stonemasons and masons with decision and science and sees the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms.

Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall. Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric or fail of their sanity. Nothing out of its place is good and nothing in its place is bad. He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportions neither more nor less. He is the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key. He is the equalizer of his age and land . . . he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking. If peace is the routine out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building vast and populous cities, encouraging agriculture and the arts and commerce—lighting the study of man, the soul, immortality—federal, state or municipal government, marriage, health, free trade, intertravel by land and sea . . . nothing too close, nothing too far off . . . the stars not too far off. In war he is the most deadly force of the war. Who recruits him recruits horse and foot . . . he fetches parks of artillery the best that engineer ever knew. If the time becomes slothful and heavy he knows how to arouse it . . . he can make every word he speaks draw blood. Whatever stagnates in the flat of custom or obedience or legislation he never stagnates. Obedience does not master him, he masters it. High up out of reach he stands turning a concentrated light . . . he turns the pivot with his finger . . . he baffles the swiftest runners as he stands and easily overtakes and envelops them. The time straying toward infidelity and confessions and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith . . . he spreads

out his dishes . . . he offers the sweet firmfibred meat that grows men and women. His brain is the ultimate brain. He is no arguer . . . he is judgment. He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling around a helpless thing. As he sees the farthest he has the most faith. His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things. In the talk on the soul and eternity and God off of his equal plane he is silent. He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denouement . . . he sees eternity in men and women . . . he does not see men and women as dreams or dots. Faith is the antiseptic of the soul . . . it pervades the common people and preserves them . . . they never give up believing and expecting and trusting. There is that indescribable freshness and unconsciousness about an illiterate person that humbles and mocks the power of the noblest expressive genius. The poet sees for a certainty how one not a great artist may be just as sacred as the greatest artist. . . . The power to destroy or remould is freely used by him but never the power of attack. What is past is past. If he does not expose superior models and prove himself by every step he takes he is not what is wanted. The presence of the greatest poet conquers . . . not parleying or struggling or any prepared attempts. Now he has passed that way see after him! there is not left any vestige of despair or misanthropy or cunning or exclusiveness or the ignominy of a nativity or color or delusion of hell or the necessity of hell . . . and no man thenceforward shall be degraded for ignorance or weakness or sin.

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into any thing that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer . . . he is individual . . . he is complete in himself . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus . . . he does not stop for any regulations . . . he is the president of regulation. What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest. Who knows the curious mystery of the eyesight? The other senses corroborate themselves, but this is removed from any proof but its own and foreruns the identities of the spiritual world. A single glance of it mocks all the investigations of man and all the instruments and books of the earth and all reasoning. What is marvelous? what is unlikely? what is impossible or baseless or vague? after you have once just opened the space of a peachpit and given audience to far and near and to the sunset and had all things enter with electric swiftness softly and duly without confusion or jostling or jam.

The land and sea, the animals fishes and birds, the sky of heaven

and the orbs, the forests mountains and rivers, are not small themes . . . but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects . . . they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls. Men and women perceive the beauty well enough . . . probably as well as he. The passionate tenacity of hunters, woodmen, early risers, cultivators of gardens and orchards and fields, the love of healthy women for the manly form, seafaring persons, drivers of horses, the passion for light and the open air, all is an old varied sign of the unfailing perception of beauty and of a residence of the poetic in outdoor people. They can never be assisted by poets to perceive . . . some may but they never can. The poetic quality is not marshalled in rhyme or uniformity or abstract addresses to things nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul. The profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight. The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form. The fluency and ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent. All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain. If the greatnesses are in conjunction in a man or woman it is enough . . . the fact will prevail through the universe . . . but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail. Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost. This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, reexamine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body. . . . The poet shall not spend his time in unneeded work. He shall know that the ground is always

ready plowed and manured . . . others may not know it but he shall. He shall go directly to the creation. His trust shall master the trust of everything he touches . . . and shall master all attachment.

The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet. He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What balks or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy. Other proportions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to his proportions. All expected from heaven or from the highest he is rapport with in the sight of the daybreak or a scene of the winter-woods or the presence of children playing or with his arm round the neck of a man or woman. His love above all love has leisure and expanse . . . he leaves room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute or suspicious lover . . . he is sure . . . he scorns intervals. His experience and the showers and thrills are not for nothing. Nothing can jar him . . . suffering and darkness cannot—death and fear cannot. To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten in the earth . . . he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore or the shore of the sea than he is of the fruition of his love and of all perfection and beauty.

The fruition of beauty is no chance of hit or miss . . . it is inevitable as life . . . it is exact and plumb as gravitation. From the eyesight proceeds another eyesight and from the hearing proceeds another hearing and from the voice proceeds another voice eternally curious of the harmony of things with man. To these respond perfections not only in the committees that were supposed to stand for the rest but in the rest themselves just the same. These understand the law of perfection in masses and floods . . . that its finish is to each for itself and onward from itself . . . that it is profuse and impartial . . . that there is not a minute of the light or dark nor an acre of the earth or sea without it—nor any direction of the sky nor any trade or employment nor any turn of events. This is the reason that about the proper expression of beauty there is precision and balance . . . one part does not need to be thrust above another. The best singer is not the one who has the most lithe and powerful organ . . . the pleasure of poems is not in them that take the handsomest measure and similes and sound.

Without effort and without exposing in the least how it is done the greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your individ-

ual character as you hear or read. To do this well is to compete with the laws that pursue and follow time. What is the purpose must surely be there and the clue of it must be there . . . and the faintest indication is the indication of the best and then becomes the clearest indication. Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet . . . he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson . . . he places himself where the future becomes present. The greatest poet does not only dazzle his rays over character and scenes and passions . . . he finally ascends and finishes all . . . he exhibits the pinnacles that no man can tell what they are for or what is beyond . . . he glows a moment on the extremest verge. He is most wonderful in his last half-hidden smile or frown . . . by that flash of the moment of parting the one that sees it shall be encouraged or terrified afterwards for many years. The greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals . . . he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons but its own. But it has sympathy as measureless as its pride and the one balances the other and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The inmost secrets of art sleep with the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both and they are vital in his style and thoughts.

The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity . . . nothing can make up for excess or for the lack of definiteness. To carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and give all subjects their articulations are powers neither common nor very uncommon. But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved it you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the graygull over the bay or the mettlesome action of the blood horse or the tall leaning of sunflowers on their stalk or the appearance of the sun journeying through heaven or the appearance of the moon afterward with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him. The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of him-

self. He swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. Let who may exalt or startle or fascinate or sooth, I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has and be as regardless of observation. What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me.

The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be proved by their unconstraint. A heroic person walks at his ease through and out of that custom or precedent or authority that suits him not. Of the traits of the brotherhood of writers savans musicians inventors and artists nothing is finer than silent defiance advancing from new free forms. In the need of poems philosophy politics mechanism science behaviour, the craft of art, an appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft, or any craft, he is greatest forever and forever who contributes the greatest original practical example. The cleanest expression is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one.

The messages of great poets to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose you enclose, What we enjoy you may enjoy. Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme? We affirm there can be unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another . . . and that men can be good or grand only of the consciousness of their supremacy within them. What do you think is the grandeur of storms and dismemberments and the deadliest battles and wrecks and the wildest fury of the elements and the power of the sea and the motion of nature and of the throes of human desires and dignity and hate and love? It is that something in the soul which says, Rage on, Whirl on, I tread master here and everywhere, Master of the spasms of the sky and of the shatter of the sea, Master of nature and passion and death, And of all terror and all pain.

The American bards shall be marked for generosity and affection and for encouraging competitors. . . . They shall be kosmos . . . without monopoly or secrecy . . . glad to pass any thing to any one . . . hungry for equals night and day. They shall not be careful of riches and privilege they shall be riches and privilege . . . they shall perceive who the most affluent man is. The most affluent man is he that confronts all the shows he sees by equivalents out of the stronger

wealth of himself. The American bard shall delineate no class of persons nor one or two out of the strata of interests nor love most nor truth most nor the soul most nor the body most . . . and not be for the eastern states more than the western or the northern states more than the southern.

Exact science and its practical movements are no checks on the greatest poet but always his encouragement and support. The outset and remembrance are there . . . there are the arms that lifted him first and brace him best . . . there he returns after all his goings and comings. The sailor and traveler . . . the atomist chemist astronomer geologist phrenologist spiritualist mathematician historian and lexicographer are not poets, but they are the lawgivers of poets and their construction underlies the structure of every perfect poem. No matter what rises or is uttered they sent the seed of the conception of it . . . of them and by them stand the visible proofs of souls . . . always of their fatherstuff must be begotten the sinewy races of bards. If there shall be love and content between the father and the son and if the greatness of the son is the exuding of the greatness of the father there shall be love between the poet and the man of demonstrable science. In the beauty of poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

Great is the faith of the flush of knowledge and of the investigation of the depths of qualities and things. Cleaving and circling here swells the soul of the poet yet is president of itself always. The depths are fathomless and therefore calm. The innocence and nakedness are resumed . . . they are neither modest nor immodest. The whole theory of the special and supernatural and all that was twined with it or educed out of it departs as a dream. What has ever happened . . . what happens and whatever may or shall happen, the vital laws enclose all . . . they are sufficient for any case and for all cases . . . none to be hurried or retarded . . . any miracle of affairs or persons inadmissible in the vast clear scheme where every motion and every spear of grass and the frames and spirits of men and women and all that concerns them are unspeakably perfect miracles all referring to all and each distinct and in its place. It is also not consistent with the reality of the soul to admit that there is anything in the known universe more divine than men and women.

Men and women and the earth and all upon it are simply to be taken as they are, and the investigation of their past and present and future shall be unintermittent and shall be done with perfect candor. Upon this basis philosophy speculates ever looking toward the poet,

ever regarding the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness never inconsistent with what is clear to the senses and to the soul. For the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness make the only point of sane philosophy. Whatever comprehends less than that . . . whatever is less than the laws of light and of astronomical motion . . . or less than the laws that follow the thief the liar the glutton and the drunkard through this life and doubtless afterward . . . or less than vast stretches of time or the slow formation of density or the patient upheaving of strata—is of no account. Whatever would put God in a poem or system of philosophy as contending against some being or influence, is also of no account. Sanity and ensemble characterise the great master . . . spoilt in one principle all is spoilt. The great master has nothing to do with miracles. He sees health for himself in being one of the mass . . . he sees the hiatus in singular eminence. To the perfect shape comes common ground. To be under the general law is great for that is to correspond with it. The master knows that he is unspeakably great and that all are unspeakably great . . . that nothing for instance is greater than to conceive children and bring them up well . . . that to be is just as great as to perceive or tell.

In the make of the great masters the idea of political liberty is indispensable. Liberty takes the adherence of heroes wherever men and women exist . . . but never takes any adherence or welcome from the rest more than from poets. They are the voice and exposition of liberty. They out of ages are worthy the grand idea . . . to them it is confided and they must sustain it. Nothing has precedence of it and nothing can warp or degrade it. The attitude of great poets is to cheer up slaves and horrify despots. The turn of their necks, the sound of their feet, the motions of their wrists, are full of hazard to the one and hope to the other. Come nigh them awhile and though they neither speak or advise you shall learn the faithful American lesson. Liberty is poorly served by men whose good intent is quelled from one failure or two failures or any number of failures, or from the casual indifference or ingratitude of the people, or from the sharp show of the tushes of power, or the bringing to bear soldiers and cannon or any penal statutes. Liberty relies upon itself, invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, and knows no discouragement. The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent advance and retreat . . . the enemy triumphs . . . the prison, the handcuffs, the iron necklace and anklet, the scaffold, garrote and leadballs do their work . . . the cause is asleep . . . the strong throats are choked with their own blood . . . the young men

drop their eyelashes toward the ground when they pass each other . . . and is liberty gone out of that place? No never. When liberty goes it is not the first to go nor the second nor third to go . . . it waits for all the rest to go . . . it is the last. . . . When the memories of the old martyrs are faded utterly away . . . when the large names of patriots are laughed at in the public halls from the lips of the orators . . . when the boys are no more christened after the same but christened after tyrants and traitors instead . . . when the laws of the free are grudgingly permitted and laws for informers and blood-money are sweet to the taste of the people . . . when I and you walk abroad upon the earth stung with compassion at the sight of numberless brothers answering our equal friendship and calling no man master—and when we are elated with noble joy at the sight of slaves . . . when the soul retires in the cool communion of the night and surveys its experience and has much extasy over the word and deed that put back a helpless innocent person into the gripe of the gripers or into any cruel inferiority . . . when those in all parts of these states who could easier realize the true American character but do not yet—when the swarms of cringers, suckers, doughfaces, lice of politics, planners of sly involutions for their own preferment to city offices or state legislatures or the judiciary or congress or the presidency, obtain a response of love and natural deference from the people whether they get the offices or no . . . when it is better to be a bound booby and rogue in office at a high salary than the poorest free mechanic or farmer with his hat unmoved from his head and firm eyes and a candid and generous heart . . . and when servility by town or state or the federal government or any oppression on a large scale or small scale can be tried on without its own punishment following duly after in exact proportion against the smallest chance of escape . . . or rather when all life and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth—then only shall the instinct of liberty be discharged from that part of the earth.

As the attributes of the poets of the kosmos concentrate in the real body and soul and in the pleasure of things they possess the superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance. As they emit themselves facts are showered over with light . . . the daylight is lit with more volatile light . . . also the deep between the setting and rising sun goes deeper many fold. Each precise object or condition or combination or process exhibits a beauty . . . the multiplication table its—old age its—the carpenter's trade its—the grand-opera its . . . the hugehulled cleanshaped New-York clipper at sea under steam or

full sail gleams with unmatched beauty . . . the American circles and large harmonies of government gleam with theirs . . . and the commonest definite intentions and actions with theirs. The poets of the kosmos advance through all interpositions and coverings and turmoils and stratagems to first principles. They are of use . . . they dissolve poverty from its need and riches from its conceit. You large proprietor they say shall not realize or perceive more than any one else. The owner of the library is not he who holds a legal title to it having bought and paid for it. Any one and every one is owner of the library who can read the same through all the varieties of tongues and subjects and styles, and in whom they enter with ease and take residence and force toward paternity and maternity, and make supple and powerful and rich and large. . . . These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them. In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books or newspapers, or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or anything to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or places or contingencies is a nuisance and revolt. Of the human form especially it is so great it must never be made ridiculous. Of ornaments to a work nothing outré can be allowed . . . but those ornaments can be allowed that conform to the perfect facts of the open air and that flow out of the nature of the work and come irrepressibly from it and are necessary to the completion of the work. Most works are most beautiful without ornament. . . . Exaggerations will be revenged in human physiology. Clean and vigorous children are jetted and conceived only in those communities where the models of natural forms are public every day. . . . Great genius and the people of these states must never be demeaned to romances. As soon as histories are properly told there is no more need of romances.

The great poets are also to be known by the absence in them of tricks and by the justification of perfect personal candor. Then folks echo a new cheap joy and a divine voice leaping from their brains: How beautiful is candor! All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor. Henceforth let no man of us lie, for we have seen that openness wins the inner and outer world and that there is no single exception, and that never since our earth gathered itself in a mass have deceit or subterfuge or prevarication attracted its smallest par-

ticle or the faintest tinge of a shade—and that through the enveloping wealth and rank of a state or the whole republic of states a sneak or sly person shall be discovered and despised . . . and that the soul has never been once fooled and never can be fooled . . . and thrift without the loving nod of the soul is only a fetid puff . . . and there never grew up in any of the continents of the globe nor upon any planet or satellite or star, nor upon the asteroids, nor in any part of ethereal space, nor in the midst of density, nor under the fluid wet of the sea, nor in the condition which precedes the birth of babes, nor at any time during the changes of life, nor in that condition that follows what we term death, nor in any stretch of abeyance or action afterward of vitality, nor in any process of formation or reformation anywhere, a being whose instinct hated the truth.

Extreme caution or prudence, the soundest organic health, large hope and comparison and fondness for women and children, large alimentiveness and destructiveness and causality, with a perfect sense of the oneness of nature and the propriety of the same spirit applied to human affairs . . . these are called up of the float of the brain of the world to be parts of the greatest poet from his birth out of his mother's womb and from her birth out of her mother's. Caution seldom goes far enough. It has been thought that the prudent citizen was the citizen who applied himself to solid gains and did well for himself and his family and completed a lawful life without debt or crime. The greatest poet sees and admits these economies as he sees the economies of food and sleep, but has higher notions of prudence than to think he gives much when he gives a few slight attentions at the latch of the gate. The premises of the prudence of life are not the hospitality of it or the ripeness and harvest of it. Beyond the independence of a little sum laid aside for burial-money, and of a few clapboards around and shingles overhead on a lot of American soil owned, and the easy dollars that supply the year's plain clothing and meals, the melancholy prudence of the abandonment of such a great being as a man is to the toss and pallor of years of moneymaking with all their scorching days and icy nights and all their stifling deceits and underhanded dodgings, or infinitessimals of parlors, or shameless stuffing while others starve . . . and all the loss of the bloom and odor of the earth and of the flowers and atmosphere and of the sea and of the true taste of the women and men you pass or have to do with in youth or middle age, and the issuing sickness and desperate revolt at the close of a life without elevation or naivete, and the ghastly chatter of a death without serenity or majesty, is the great

fraud upon modern civilization and forethought, blotching the surface and system which civilization undeniably drafts, and moistening with tears the immense features it spreads and spreads with such velocity before the reached kisses of the soul. . . . Still the right explanation remains to be made about prudence. The prudence of the mere wealth and respectability of the most esteemed life appears too faint for the eye to observe at all when little and large alike drop quietly aside at the thought of the prudence suitable for immortality. What is wisdom that fills the thinness of a year or seventy or eighty years to wisdom spaced out by ages and coming back at a certain time with strong reinforcements and rich presents and the clear faces of wedding-guests as far as you can look in every direction running gaily toward you? Only the soul is of itself . . . all else has reference to what ensues. All that a person does or thinks is of consequence. Not a move can a man or woman make that affects him or her in a day or a month or any part of the direct lifetime or the hour of death but the same affects him or her onward afterward through the indirect lifetime. The indirect is always as great and real as the direct. The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to the body. Not one name of word or deed . . . not of venereal sores or discolorations . . . not the privacy of the onanist . . . not of the putrid veins of gluttons or rum-drinkers . . . not peculation or cunning or betrayal or murder . . . no serpentine poison of those that seduce women . . . not the foolish yielding of women . . . not prostitution . . . not of any depravity of young men . . . not of the attainment of gain by discreditable means . . . not any nastiness of appetite . . . not any harshness of officers to men or judges to prisoners or fathers to sons or sons to fathers or husbands to wives or bosses to their boys . . . not of greedy looks or malignant wishes . . . nor any of the wiles practised by people upon themselves . . . ever is or ever can be stamped on the programme but it is duly realized and returned, and that returned in further performances . . . and they returned again. Nor can the push of charity or personal force ever be any thing else than the profoundest reason, whether it brings arguments to hand or no. No specification is necessary . . . to add or subtract or divide is in vain. Little or big, learned or unlearned, white or black, legal or illegal, sick or well, from the first inspiration down the windpipe to the last expiration out of it, all that a male or female does that is vigorous and benevolent and clean is so much sure profit to him or her in the unshakable order of the universe and through the whole scope of it forever. If the savage or felon is wise

it is well . . . if the greatest poet or savan is wise it is simply the same . . . if the President or chief justice is wise it is the same . . . if the young mechanic or farmer is wise it is no more or less . . . if the prostitute is wise it is no more nor less. The interest will come round . . . all will come round. All the best actions of war and peace . . . all help given to relatives and strangers and the poor and old and sorrowful and young children and widows and the sick, and to all shunned persons . . . all furtherance of fugitives and of the escape of slaves . . . all the self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks and saw others take the seats of the boats . . . all offering of substance or life for the good old cause, or for a friend's sake or opinion's sake . . . all pains of enthusiasts scoffed at by their neighbors . . . all the vast sweet love and precious suffering of mothers . . . all honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded . . . all the grandeur and good of the few ancient nations whose fragments of annals we inherit . . . and all the good of the hundreds of far mightier and more ancient nations unknown to us by name or date or location . . . all that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or not . . . all that has at any time been well suggested out of the divine heart of man or by the divinity of his mouth or by the shaping of his great hands . . . and all that is well thought or done this day on any part of the surface of the globe . . . or on any of the wandering stars or fixed stars by those there as we are here . . . or that is henceforth to be well thought or done by you whoever you are, or by any one—these singly and wholly inured at their time and inure now and will inure always to the identities from which they sprung or shall spring. . . . Did you guess any of them lived only its moment? The world does not so exist . . . no parts palpable or impalpable so exist . . . no result exists now without being from its long antecedent result, and that from its antecedent, and so backward without the farthest mentionable spot coming a bit nearer to the beginning than any other spot. . . . Whatever satisfies the soul is truth. The prudence of the greatest poet answers at last the craving and glut of the soul, is not contemptuous of less ways of prudence if they conform to its ways, puts off nothing, permits no let-up for its own case or any case, has no particular sabbath or judgment-day, divides not the living from the dead or the righteous from the unrighteous, is satisfied with the present, matches every thought or act by its correlative, knows no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement . . . knows that the young man who composedly periled his life and lost it has done exceeding well for himself, while the man who has not periled his

life and retains it to old age in riches and ease has perhaps achieved nothing for himself worth mentioning . . . and that only that person has no great prudence to learn who has learnt to prefer real longlived things, and favors body and soul the same, and perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct, and what evil or good he does leaping onward and waiting to meet him again—and who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries or avoids death.

The direct trial of him who would be the greatest poet is today. If he does not flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides . . . and if he does not attract his own land body and soul to himself and hang on its neck with incomparable love and plunge his semitic muscle into its merits and demerits . . . and if he be not himself the age transfigured . . . and if to him is not opened the eternity which gives similitude to all periods and locations and processes and animate and inanimate forms, and which is the bond of time, and rises up from its inconceivable vagueness and infiniteness in the swimming shape of today, and is held by the ductile anchors of life, and makes the present spot the passage from what was to what shall be, and commits itself to the representation of this wave of an hour and this one of the sixty beautiful children of the wave—let him merge in the general run and wait his developement . . . Still the final test of poems or any character or work remains. The prescient poet projects himself centuries ahead and judges performer or performance after the changes of time. Does it live through them? Does it still hold on untired? Will the same style and the direction of genius to similar points be satisfactory now? Has no new discovery in science or arrival at superior planes of thought and judgment and behaviour fixed him or his so that either can be looked down upon? Have the marches of tens and hundreds and thousands of years made willing detours to the right hand and the left hand for his sake? Is he beloved long and long after he is buried? Does the young man think often of him? and the young woman think often of him? and do the middle-aged and the old think of him?

A great poem is for ages and ages in common and for all degrees and complexions and all departments and sects and for a woman as much as a man and a man as much as a woman. A great poem is no finish to a man or woman but rather a beginning. Has any one fancied he could sit at last under some due authority and rest satisfied with explanations and realize and be content and full? To no such terminus does the greatest poet bring . . . he brings neither cessation or sheltered fatness and ease. The touch of him tells in action. Whom he

takes he takes with firm sure grasp into live regions previously unattained . . . thenceforward is no rest . . . they see the space and ineffable sheen that turn the old spots and lights into dead vacuums. The companion of him beholds the birth and progress of stars and learns one of the meanings. Now there shall be a man cohered out of tumult and chaos . . . the elder encourages the younger and shows him how . . . they two shall launch off fearlessly together till the new world fits an orbit for itself and looks unabashed on the lesser orbits of the stars and sweeps through the ceaseless rings and shall never be quiet again.

There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done. They may wait awhile . . . perhaps a generation or two . . . dropping off by degrees. A superior breed shall take their place . . . the gangs of kosmos and prophets en masse shall take their place. A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own priest. The churches built under their umbrage shall be the churches of men and women. Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things. They shall find their inspiration in real objects today, symptoms of the past and future. . . . They shall not deign to defend immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth.

The English language befriends the grand American expression . . . it is brawny enough and limber and full enough. On the tough stock of a race who through all change of circumstances was never without the idea of political liberty, which is the animus of all liberty, it has attracted the terms of daintier and gayer and subtler and more elegant tongues. It is the powerful language of resistance . . . it is the dialect of common sense. It is the speech of the proud and melancholy races and of all who aspire. It is the chosen tongue to express growth faith self-esteem freedom justice equality friendliness amplitude prudence decision and courage. It is the medium that shall well nigh express the inexpressible.

No great literature nor any like style of behaviour or oratory or social intercourse or household arrangements or public institutions or the treatment by bosses of employed people, nor executive detail or detail of the army or navy, nor spirit of legislation or courts or police or tuition or architecture or songs or amusements or the costumes of young men, can long elude the jealous and passionate

instinct of American standards. Whether or no the sign appears from the mouths of the people, it throbs a live interrogation in every free-man's and freewoman's heart after that which passes by or this built to remain. Is it uniform with my country? Are its disposals without ignominious distinctions? Is it for the evergrowing communes of brothers and lovers, large, well-united, proud beyond the old models, generous beyond all models? Is it something grown fresh out of the fields or drawn from the sea for use to me today here? I know that what answers for me an American must answer for any individual or nation that serves for a part of my materials. Does this answer? or is it without reference to universal needs? or sprung of the needs of the less developed society of special ranks? or old needs of pleasure overlaid by modern science and forms? Does this acknowledge liberty with audible and absolute acknowledgement, and set slavery at naught for life and death? Will it help breed one goodshaped and wellhung man, and a woman to be his perfect and independent mate? Does it improve manners? Is it for the nursing of the young of the republic? Does it solve readily with the sweet milk of the nipples of the breasts of the mother of many children? Has it too the old ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality? Does it look with the same love on the last born and those hardening toward stature, and on the errant, and on those who disdain all strength of assault outside of their own?

The poems distilled from other poems will probably pass away. The coward will surely pass away. The expectation of the vital and great can only be satisfied by the demeanor of the vital and great. The swarms of the polished deprecating and reflectors and the polite float off and leave no remembrance. America prepares with composure and goodwill for the visitors that have sent word. It is not intellect that is to be their warrant and welcome. The talented, the artist, the ingenious, the editor, the statesman, the erudite . . . they are not unappreciated . . . they fall in their place and do their work. The soul of the nation also does its work. No disguise can pass on it . . . no disguise can conceal from it. It rejects none, it permits all. Only toward as good as itself and toward the like of itself will it advance half-way. An individual is as superb as a nation when he has the qualities which make a superb nation. The soul of the largest and wealthiest and proudest nation may well go half-way to meet that of its poets. The signs are effectual. There is no fear of mistake. If the one is true the other is true. The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.



## INSCRIPTIONS

### ONE'S-SELF I SING

ONE'S-SELF I sing, a simple separate person,  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,  
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the Muse,  
I say the Form complete is worthier far,  
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,  
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,  
The Modern Man I sing.

### AS I PONDER'D IN SILENCE

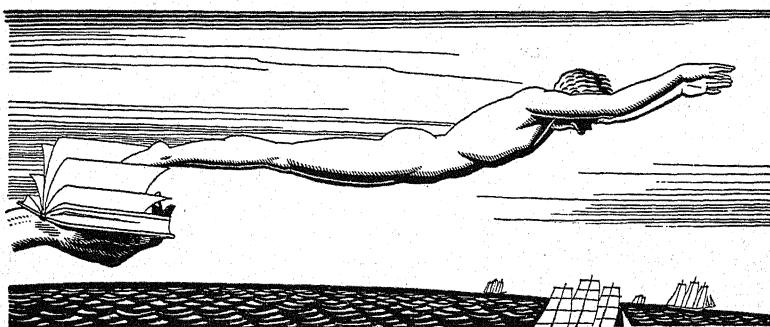
As I ponder'd in silence,  
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,  
A Phantom arose before me with distrustful aspect,  
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,

The genius of poets of old lands,  
 As to me directing like flame its eyes,  
 With finger pointing to many immortal songs,  
 And menacing voice, *What singest thou?* it said,  
*Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring bards?*  
*And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,*  
*The making of perfect soldiers.*  
*Be it so, then I answer'd,*  
*I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and greater one*  
*than any,*  
*Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight, advance and*  
*retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,*  
*(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last,) the field*  
*the world,*  
*For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,*  
*Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,*  
*I above all promote brave soldiers.*

### IN CABIN'D SHIPS AT SEA

IN cabin'd ships at sea,  
 The boundless blue on every side expanding,  
 With whistling winds and music of the waves, the large imperious  
 waves,  
 Or some lone bark buoy'd on the dense marine,  
 Where joyous full of faith, spreading white sails,  
 She cleaves the ether mid the sparkle and the foam of day, or under  
 many a star at night,  
 By sailors young and old haply will I, a reminiscence of the land,  
 be read,  
 In full rapport at last.

*Here are our thoughts, voyagers' thoughts,*  
*Here not the land, firm land, alone appears, may then by them be said;*  
*The sky o'erarches here, we feel the undulating deck beneath our feet,*  
*We feel the long pulsation, ebb and flow of endless motion,*  
*The tones of unseen mystery, the vague and vast suggestions of the*  
*briny world, the liquid-flowing syllables,*  
*The perfume, the faint creaking of the cordage, the melancholy*  
*rhythm,*  
*The boundless vista and the horizon far and dim are all here,*  
*And this is ocean's poem.*



Then falter not O book, fulfil your destiny,  
 You not a reminiscence of the land alone,  
 You too as a lone bark cleaving the ether, purpos'd I know not  
     whither, yet ever full of faith,  
 Consort to every ship that sails, sail you!  
 Bear forth to them folded my love, (dear mariners, for you I fold  
     it here in every leaf;)  
 Speed on my book! spread your white sails my little bark athwart  
     the imperious waves,  
 Chant on, sail on, bear o'er the boundless blue from me to every sea,  
 This song for mariners and all their ships.

#### TO FOREIGN LANDS

I HEARD that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle the New  
     World,  
 And to define America, her athletic Democracy,  
 Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in them what you  
     wanted.

#### TO A HISTORIAN

You who celebrate bygones,  
 Who have explored the outward, the surfaces of the races, the life  
     that has exhibited itself,  
 Who have treated of man as the creature of politics, aggregates, rulers  
     and priests,  
 I, habitan of the Alleghanies, treating of him as he is in himself in his  
     own rights,

Pressing the pulse of the life that has seldom exhibited itself, (the great pride of man in himself,) Chanter of Personality, outlining what is yet to be, I project the history of the future.

## TO THEE OLD CAUSE

To thee old cause!  
 Thou peerless, passionate, good cause,  
 Thou stern, remorseless, sweet idea,  
 Deathless throughout the ages, races, lands,  
 After a strange sad war, great war for thee,  
 (I think all war through time was really fought, and ever will be  
     really fought, for thee.)  
 These chants for thee, the eternal march of thee.

(A war O soldiers not for itself alone,  
 Far, far more stood silently waiting behind, now to advance in this  
     book.)

Thou orb of many orbs!  
 Thou seething principle! thou well-kept, latent germ! thou centre!  
 Around the idea of thee the war revolving,  
 With all its angry and vehement play of causes,  
 (With vast results to come for thrice a thousand years.)  
 These recitatives for thee,—my book and the war are one,  
 Merged in its spirit I and mine, as the contest hinged on thee,  
 As a wheel on its axis turns, this book unwitting to itself,  
 Around the idea of thee.

## EIDÓLONS

I MET a seer,  
 Passing the hues and objects of the world,  
 The fields of art and learning, pleasure, sense,  
     To glean eidólons.

Put in thy chants said he,  
 No more the puzzling hour nor day, nor segments, parts, put in,  
 Put first before the rest as light for all and entrance-song of all,  
     That of eidólons.

Ever the dim beginning,  
Ever the growth, the rounding of the circle,  
Ever the summit and the merge at last, (to surely start again,)  
Eidólons! eidólons!

Ever the mutable,  
Ever materials, changing, crumbling, re-cohering,  
Ever the ateliers, the factories divine,  
Issuing eidólons.

Lo, I or you,  
Or woman, man, or state, known or unknown,  
We seeming solid wealth, strength, beauty build,  
But really build eidólons.

The ostent evanescent,  
The substance of an artist's mood or savan's studies long,  
Or warrior's, martyr's, hero's toils,  
To fashion his eidólon.

Of every human life,  
(The units gather'd, posted, not a thought, emotion, deed, left out,)  
The whole or large or small summ'd, added up,  
In its eidólon.

The old, old urge,  
Based on the ancient pinnacles, lo, higher pinnacles,  
From science and the modern still impell'd,  
The old, old urge, eidólons.

The present now and here,  
America's busy, teeming, intricate whirl,  
Of aggregate and segregate for only thence releasing,  
To-day's eidólons.

These with the past,  
Of vanish'd lands, of all the reigns of kings across the sea,  
Old conquerors, old campaigns, old sailors' voyages,  
Joining eidólons.

Densities, growth, façades,  
Strata of mountains, soils, rocks, giant trees,  
Far-born, far-dying, living long, to leave,  
Eidólons everlasting.

Exaltè, rapt, ecstatic,  
 The visible but their womb of birth,  
 Of orbic tendencies to shape and shape and shape,  
 The mighty earth-eidólon.

All space, all time,  
 (The stars, the terrible perturbations of the suns,  
 Swelling, collapsing, ending, serving their longer, shorter use,)  
 Fill'd with eidólons only.

The noiseless myriads,  
 The infinite oceans where the rivers empty,  
 The separate countless free identities, like eyesight,  
 The true realities, eidólons.

Not this the world,  
 Nor these the universes, they the universes,  
 Purport and end, ever the permanent life of life,  
 Eidólons, eidólons.

Beyond thy lectures learn'd professor,  
 Beyond thy telescope or spectroscope observer keen, beyond all mathematics.  
 Beyond the doctor's surgery, anatomy, beyond the chemist with his chemistry,  
 The entities of entities, eidólons.

Unfix'd yet fix'd,  
 Ever shall be, ever have been and are,  
 Sweeping the present to the infinite future,  
 Eidólons, eidólons, eidólons.

The prophet and the bard,  
 Shall yet maintain themselves, in higher stages yet,  
 Shall mediate to the Modern, to Democracy, interpret yet to them,  
 God and eidólons.

And thee my soul,  
 Joys, ceaseless exercises, exaltations,  
 Thy yearning amply fed at last, prepared to meet,  
 Thy mates, eidólons.

Thy body permanent,  
 The body lurking there within the body,  
 The only purport of the form thou art, the real I myself,  
 An image, an eidónon.

Thy very songs not in thy songs,  
 No special strains to sing, none for itself,  
 But from the whole resulting, rising at last and floating,  
 A round full-orb'd eidónon.



## FOR HIM I SING

FOR him I sing,  
 I raise the present on the past,  
 (As some perennial tree out of its roots, the present on the past,)  
 With time and space I him dilate and fuse the immortal laws,  
 To make himself by them the law unto himself.

## WHEN I READ THE BOOK

WHEN I read the book, the biography famous,  
 And is this then (said I) what the author calls a man's life?  
 And so will some one when I am dead and gone write my life?  
 (As if any man really knew aught of my life,  
 Why even I myself I often think know little or nothing of my real life,  
 Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clews and indirections  
 I seek for my own use to trace out here.)

## BEGINNING MY STUDIES

BEGINNING my studies the first step pleas'd me so much,  
The mere fact consciousness, these forms, the power of motion,  
The least insect or animal, the senses, eyesight, love,  
The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,  
I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,  
But stop and loiter all the time to sing it in ecstatic songs.

## BEGINNERS

How they are provided for upon the earth, (appearing at intervals,)  
How dear and dreadful they are to the earth,  
How they inure to themselves as much as to any—what a paradox ap-  
pears their age,  
How people respond to them, yet know them not,  
How there is something relentless in their fate all times,  
How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation and reward,  
And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for the same  
great purchase.

## TO THE STATES

To the States or any one of them, or any city of the States, *Resist  
much, obey little,*,  
Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved,  
Once fully enslaved, no nation, state, city of this earth, ever afterward  
resumes its liberty.

## ON JOURNEYS THROUGH THE STATES

On journeys through the States we start,  
(Ay through the world, urged by these songs,  
Sailing henceforth to every land, to every sea,)  
We willing learners of all, teachers of all, and lovers of all.

We have watch'd the seasons dispensing themselves and passing on,  
And have said, Why should not a man or woman do as much as the  
seasons, and effuse as much?

We dwell a while in every city and town,  
 We pass through Kanada, the North-east, the vast valley of the Mississippi, and the Southern States,  
 We confer on equal terms with each of the States,  
 We make trial of ourselves and invite men and women to hear,  
 We say to ourselves, Remember, fear not, be candid, promulge the body and the soul,  
 Dwell a while and pass on, be copious, temperate, chaste, magnetic,  
 And what you effuse may then return as the seasons return,  
 And may be just as much as the seasons.

## TO A CERTAIN CANTATRICE

HERE, take this gift,  
 I was reserving it for some hero, speaker, or general,  
 One who should serve the good old cause, the great idea, the progress and freedom of the race.  
 Some brave confronter of despots, some daring rebel;  
 But I see that what I was reserving belongs to you just as much as to any.



## ME IMPERTURBE

ME imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,  
 Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst of irrational things,  
 Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they,  
 Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes, less important than I thought,  
 Me toward the Mexican sea, or in the Mannahatta or the Tennessee, or far north or inland,  
 A river man, or a man of the woods or of any farm-life of these States or of the coast, or the lakes or Kanada,  
 Me wherever my life is lived, I to be self-balanced for contingencies, To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and animals do.

## SAVANTISM

THITHER as I look I see each result and glory retracing itself and  
nestling close, always obligated,  
Thither hours, months, years—thither trades, compacts, establish-  
ments, even the most minute,  
Thither every-day life, speech, utensils, politics, persons, estates;  
Thither we also, I with my leaves and songs, trustful, admirant,  
As a father to his father going takes his children along with him.

## THE SHIP STARTING

Lo, the unbounded sea,  
On its breast a ship starting, spreading all sails, carrying even her  
moonsails,  
The pennant is flying aloft as she speeds she speeds so stately—below  
emulous waves press forward,  
They surround the ship with shining curving motions and foam.

## I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and  
strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deck-hand  
singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he  
stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or  
at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or  
of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows,  
robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

## WHAT PLACE IS BESIEGED?

WHAT place is besieged, and vainly tries to raise the siege?  
Lo, I send to that place a commander, swift, brave, immortal,  
And with him horse and foot, and parks of artillery,  
And artillery-men, the deadliest that ever fired gun.

## STILL THOUGH THE ONE I SING

STILL though the one I sing,  
(One, yet of contradictions made,) I dedicate to Nationality,  
I leave in him revolt, (O latent right of insurrection! O quenchless, in-  
dispensable fire!)

## SHUT NOT YOUR DOORS

SHUT not your doors to me proud libraries,  
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd shelves, yet needed  
most, I bring,  
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,  
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every thing,  
A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt by the intellect,  
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page.

## POETS TO COME

Poets to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!  
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,  
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater than be-  
fore known,  
Arouse! for you must justify me.

I myself but write one or two indicative words for the future,  
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping, turns a  
casual look upon you and then averts his face,  
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,  
Expecting the main things from you.

## TO YOU

STRANGER, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me, why  
.. should you not speak to me?  
And why should I not speak to you?

## THOU READER

THOU reader throbtest life and pride and love the same as I,  
Therefore for thee the following chants.



## STARTING FROM PAUMANOK

### 1

STARTING from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born,  
Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother,  
After roaming many lands, lover of populous pavements,  
Dweller in Mannahatta my city, or on southern savannas,  
Or a soldier camp'd or carrying my knapsack and gun, or a miner in  
California,  
Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat, my drink from  
the spring,  
Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,  
Far from the clank of crowds intervals passing rapt and happy,  
Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri, aware of mighty  
Niagara,  
Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the hirsute and strong-  
breasted bull,  
Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month flowers experienced, stars, rain, snow,  
my amaze,  
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones and the flight of the moun-  
tain-hawk,  
And heard at dawn the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush from the  
swamp-cedars,  
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,  
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,  
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.

This then is life,  
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and convulsions.

How curious! how real!  
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.

See revolving the globe,  
The ancestor-continents away group'd together,  
The present and future continents north and south, with the isthmus  
between.

See, vast trackless spaces,  
As in a dream they change, they swiftly fill,  
Countless masses debouch upon them,  
They are now cover'd with the foremost people, arts, institutions,  
known.

See, projected through time,  
For me an audience interminable.

With firm and regular step they wend, they never stop,  
Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions,  
One generation playing its part and passing on,  
Another generation playing its part and passing on in its turn,  
With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards me to listen,  
With eyes retrospective towards me.

Americanos! conquerors! marches humanitarian!  
Foremost! century marches! Libertad! masses!  
For you a programme of chants.

Chants of the prairies,  
Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the Mexican sea,

Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota,  
Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence equidistant,  
Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

## 4

Take my leaves America, take them South and take them North,  
Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own offspring,  
Surround them East and West, for they would surround you,  
And you precedents, connect lovingly with them, for they connect lovingly with you.

I conn'd old times,  
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters,  
Now if eligible O that the great masters might return and study me.

In the name of these States shall I scorn the antique?  
Why these are the children of the antique to justify it.

## 5

Dead poets, philosophs, priests,  
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,  
Language-shapers on other shores,  
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or desolate,  
I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left wafted hither,  
I have perused it, own it is admirable, (moving awhile among it,) Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever deserve more than it deserves,  
Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it, I stand in my place with my own day here.

Here lands female and male,  
Here the heir-ship and heiress-ship of the world, here the flame of materials,  
Here spirituality the translatress, the openly-avow'd, The ever-tending, the finale of visible forms,  
The satisfier, after due long-waiting now advancing, Yes here comes my mistress the soul.

The soul,  
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid—longer  
than water ebbs and flows.

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be the  
most spiritual poems,  
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,  
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my soul and  
of immortality.

I will make a song for these States that no one State may under any  
circumstances be subjected to another State,  
And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day and by night  
between all the States, and between any two of them,  
And I will make a song for the ears of the President, full of weapons  
with menacing points,  
And behind the weapons countless dissatisfied faces;  
And a song make I of the One form'd out of all,  
The fang'd and glittering One whose head is over all,  
Resolute warlike One including and over all,  
(However high the head of any else that head is over all.)

I will acknowledge contemporary lands,  
I will trail the whole geography of the globe and salute courteously  
every city large and small,  
And employments! I will put in my poems that with you is heroism  
upon land and sea,  
And I will report all heroism from an American point of view.

I will sing the song of companionship,  
I will show what alone must finally compact these,  
I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly love, indicating  
it in me,  
I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that were threatening  
to consume me,  
I will lift what has too long kept down those smouldering fires,  
I will give them complete abandonment,  
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,  
For who but I should understand love with all its sorrow and joy?  
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?

I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races,  
I advance from the people in their own spirit,  
Here is what sings unrestricted faith.

Omnes! omnes! let others ignore what they may,  
I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also,  
I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation is—and I say  
    there is in fact no evil,  
(Or if there is I say it is just as important to you, to the land or to me,  
    as any thing else.)

I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a religion, I  
    descend into the arena,  
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there, the winner's  
    pealing shouts,  
Who knows? they may rise from me yet, and soar above everything.)

Each is not for its own sake,  
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,  
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,  
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how certain  
    the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States must be  
    their religion,  
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur;  
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,  
Nor land nor man or woman without religion.)

What are you doing young man?  
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science, art, amours?  
These ostensible realities, politics, points?  
Your ambition or business whatever it may be?

It is well—against such I say not a word, I am their poet also,  
But behold! such swiftly subside, burnt up for religion's sake,

For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame, the essential life  
of the earth,  
Any more than such are to religion.

## 9

What do you seek so pensive and silent?  
What do you need camerado?  
Dear son do you think it is love?

Listen dear son—listen America, daughter or son,  
It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess, and yet it satisfies, it is great,  
But there is something else very great, it makes the whole coincide,  
It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous hands sweeps and provides for all.

## 10

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater religion,  
The following chants each for its kind I sing.

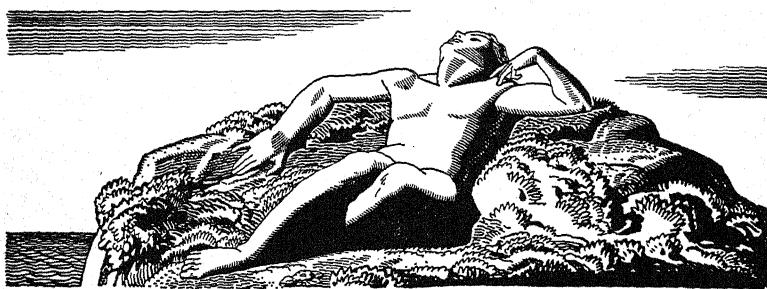
My comrade!  
For you to share with me two greatnesses, and a third one rising inclusive and more resplendent,  
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness of Religion.

Melange mine own, the unseen and the seen,  
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,  
Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering around me,  
Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air that we know not of,  
Contact daily and hourly that will not release me,  
These selecting, these in hints demanded of me.

Not he with a daily kiss onward from childhood kissing me,  
Has winded and twisted around me that which holds me to him,  
Any more than I am held to the heavens and all the spiritual world,  
After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes—equalities! O divine average!  
Warblings under the sun, usher'd as now, or at noon, or setting,

Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching hither,  
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to them, and cheer-  
fully pass them forward.



## 11

As I have walk'd in Alabama my morning walk,  
I have seen where the she-bird the mocking-bird sat on her nest in the  
briers hatching her brood.

I have seen the he-bird also,  
I have paus'd to hear him near at hand inflating his throat and joy-  
fully singing.

And while I paus'd it came to me that what he really sang for was  
not there only,  
Nor for his mate nor himself only, nor all sent back by the echoes,  
But subtle, clandestine, away beyond,  
A charge transmitted and gift occult for those being born.

## 12

Democracy! near at hand to you a throat is now inflating itself and  
joyfully singing.

Ma femme! for the brood beyond us and of us,  
For those who belong here and those to come,  
I exultant to be ready for them will now shake out carols stronger  
and haughtier than have ever yet been heard upon earth.

I will make the songs of passion to give them their way,  
And your songs outlaw'd offenders, for I scan you with kindred eyes,  
and carry you with me the same as any.

I will make the true poem of riches,  
To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres and goes for-  
ward and is not dropt by death;  
I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all, and I will be the bard  
of personality,  
And I will show of male and female that either is but the equal of the  
other,  
And sexual organs and acts! do you concentrate in me, for I am deter-  
min'd to tell you with courageous clear voice to prove you illus-  
trious,  
And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present, and can  
be none in the future,  
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be turn'd  
to beautiful results,  
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death,  
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and events are  
compact,  
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as  
profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts,  
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to ensemble,  
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference to all  
days,  
And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem but has ref-  
erence to the soul,  
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find there is  
no one nor any particle of one but has reference to the soul.

## 13

Was somebody asking to see the soul?  
See, your own shape and countenance, persons, substances, beasts, the  
trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.

All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them;  
How can the real body ever die and be buried?

Of your real body and any man's or woman's real body,  
 Item for item it will elude the hands of the corpse-cleaners and pass  
     to fitting spheres,  
 Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth to the mo-  
     ment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their impression, the mean-  
     ing, the main concern,

Any more than a man's substance and life or a woman's substance  
     and life return in the body and the soul,  
 Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main concern, and  
     includes and is the soul;

Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your body, or any  
     part of it!

## 14

Whoever you are, to you endless announcements!

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet?

Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth and indicative hand?

Toward the male of the States, and toward the female of the States,  
 Exulting words, words to Democracy's lands.

Interlink'd, food-yielding lands!

Land of coal and iron! land of gold! land of cotton, sugar, rice!

Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and hemp! land of the apple  
     and the grape!

Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world! land of those  
     sweet-air'd interminable plateaus!

Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of adobie!

Lands where the north-west Columbia winds, and where the south-  
     west Colorado winds!

Land of the eastern Chesapeake! land of the Delaware!

Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan!

Land of the Old Thirteen! Massachusetts land! land of Vermont and  
     Connecticut!

Land of the ocean shores! land of sierras and peaks!

Land of boatmen and sailors! fishermen's land!

Inextricable lands! the clutch'd together! the passionate ones!

The side by side! the elder and younger brothers! the bony-limb'd!  
The great women's land! the feminine! the experienced sisters and  
the inexperienced sisters!  
Far breath'd land! Arctic braced! Mexican breez'd! the diverse! the  
compact!  
The Pennsylvanian! the Virginian! the double Carolinian!  
O all and each well-loved by me! my intrepid nations! O I at any rate  
include you all with perfect love!  
I cannot be discharged from you! not from one any sooner than an-  
other!  
O death! O for all that, I am yet of you unseen this hour with irre-  
pressible love,  
Walking New England, a friend, a traveler,  
Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer ripples on Pau-  
manok's sands,  
Crossing the prairies, dwelling again in Chicago, dwelling in every  
town,  
Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,  
Listening to orators and oratresses in public halls,  
Of and through the States as during life, each man and woman my  
neighbor,  
The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as near to him and  
her,  
The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet with any of  
them,  
Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river, yet in my house of adobie,  
Yet returning eastward, yet in the Seaside State or in Maryland,  
Yet Kanadian cheerily braving the winter, the snow and ice welcome  
to me,  
Yet a true son either of Maine or of the Granite State, or the Narra-  
gansett Bay State, or the Empire State,  
Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet welcoming every new  
brother,  
Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the hour they  
unite with the old ones,



Coming among the new ones myself to be their companion and equal,  
 coming personally to you now,  
 Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

## 15

With me with firm holding, yet haste, haste on.

For your life adhere to me,  
 (I may have to be persuaded many times before I consent to give my-  
   self really to you, but what of that?  
 Must not Nature be persuaded many times?)

No dainty dolce affettuoso I,  
 Bearded, sun-burnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have arrived,  
 To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes of the universe,  
 For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.

## 16

On my way a moment I pause,  
 Here for you! and here for America!  
 Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the States I harbinger  
   glad and sublime,  
 And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of the red aborigines.

The red aborigines,  
 Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as of birds  
   and animals in the woods, syllabled to us for names,  
 Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez, Chattahoochee,  
   Kaqueta, Oronoco,  
 Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla,  
 Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charging the water  
   and the land with names.

## 17

Expanding and swift, henceforth,  
 Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick and audacious,  
 A world primal again, vistas of glory incessant and branching,  
 A new race dominating previous ones and grander far, with new contests,  
 New politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions and arts.  
 These, my voice announcing—I will sleep no more but arise,  
 You oceans that have been calm within me! how I feel you, fathomless, stirring, preparing unprecedented waves and storms.

## 18

See, steamers steaming through my poems,  
 See, in my poems immigrants continually coming and landing,  
 See, in arriere, the wigwam, the trail, the hunter's hut, the flat-boat, the maize-leaf, the claim, the rude fence, and the backwoods village,  
 See, on the one side the Western Sea and on the other the Eastern Sea, how they advance and retreat upon my poems as upon their own shores,  
 See, pastures and forests in my poems—see, animals wild and tame—see, beyond the Kaw, countless herds of buffalo feeding on short curly grass,  
 See, in my poems, cities, solid, vast, inland, with paved streets, with iron and stone edifices, ceaseless vehicles, and commerce,  
 See, the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press—see, the electric telegraph stretching across the continent,  
 See, through Atlantica's depths pulses American Europe reaching, pulses of Europe duly return'd,  
 See, the strong and quick locomotive as it departs, panting, blowing the steam-whistle,  
 See, ploughmen ploughing farms—see, miners digging mines—see, the numberless factories,  
 See, mechanics busy at their benches with tools—see from among them superior judges, philosophs, Presidents, emerge, drest in working dresses,  
 See, lounging through the shops and fields of the States, me well-below'd, close-held by day and night,  
 Hear the loud echoes of my songs there—read the hints come at last.

O camerado close! O you and me at last, and us two only.  
O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!  
O something ecstatic and undemonstrable! O music wild!  
O now I triumph—and you shall also;  
O hand in hand—O wholesome pleasure—O one more desirer and  
lover!  
O to haste firm holding—to haste, haste on with me.



## SONG OF MYSELF

### 1

I CELEBRATE myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loaf and invite my soul,  
I learn and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their  
parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,  
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy.

## 2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with  
perfumes,  
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,  
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation,  
it is odorless,  
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,  
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,  
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,  
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and  
vine,  
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing  
of blood and air through my lungs,  
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-  
color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,  
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of  
the wind,  
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,  
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,  
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and  
hill-sides,  
The feeling of health, the full-moon trill, the song of me rising from  
bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd the  
earth much?  
Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?  
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of  
all poems,  
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions  
of suns left,)  
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look  
through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,  
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,  
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

## 3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning  
and the end,  
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,  
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,  
Always the procreant urge of the world.  
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and in-  
crease, always sex,  
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well entretied,  
braced in the beams,  
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,  
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my  
soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,  
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age,  
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they dis-  
cuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty  
and clean,  
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less  
familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing;  
 As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through the  
     night, and withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread,  
 Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the house with  
     their plenty,  
 Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at my  
     eyes,  
 That they turn from gazing after and down the road,  
 And forthwith cipher and show to me a cent,  
 Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which is  
     ahead?

## 4

Trippers and askers surround me,  
 People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward and  
     city I live in, or the nation,  
 The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and new,  
 My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,  
 The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love,  
 The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or loss or  
     lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,  
 Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news, the  
     fitful events;  
 These come to me days and nights and go from me again,  
 But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,  
 Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,  
 Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,  
 Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,  
 Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with  
     linguists and contenders,  
 I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

## 5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,  
 And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,  
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even  
the best.  
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,  
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over  
upon me,  
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue  
to my bare-stript heart,  
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that  
pass all the argument of the earth,  
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,  
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,  
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women  
my sisters and lovers,  
And that a kelson of the creation is love,  
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,  
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,  
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein  
and poke-weed.

## 6

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands;  
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more  
than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green  
stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,  
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corner, that we may see and  
remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegeta-  
tion.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,  
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,  
Growing among black folks as among white,  
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I re-  
ceive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves,

Tenderly will I use you curling grass.  
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,  
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,  
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out  
of their mother's laps,  
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,  
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,  
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,  
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and  
women,  
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken  
soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?  
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,  
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,  
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end  
to arrest it,  
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,  
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.



## 7

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?  
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know it.

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe, and  
am not contain'd between my hat and boots,  
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one good,  
The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all good.

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,  
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and  
fathomless as myself,  
(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male and female,  
For me those that have been boys and that love women,  
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be slighted,  
For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers and the  
mothers of mothers,  
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,  
For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,  
I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,  
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot be shaken  
away.

The little one sleeps in its cradle,  
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies  
with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill,  
I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,  
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the pistol has  
fallen.

The slab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of the  
promenaders,

The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank  
of the shod horses on the granite floor,

The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls,

The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs,

The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne to the hospital,

The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,

The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly working his  
passage to the centre of the crowd,

The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,

What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck or in fits,

What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry home and  
give birth to babes,

What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls  
restrain'd by decorum,

Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, re-  
jections with convex lips,

I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come and I depart.

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,  
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn wagon,  
The clear light plays on the brown gray and green intertinged,  
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow.

I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,  
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,

I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and timothy,  
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

## 10

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,  
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,  
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,  
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,  
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and gun by my side.

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the sparkle and  
scud,  
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout joyously from the  
deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt for me,  
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had a good time;  
You should have been with us that day round the chowder-kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far west, the  
bride was a red girl,  
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and dumbly smoking,  
they had moccasins to their feet and large thick blankets hanging  
from their shoulders,  
On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in skins, his lux-  
uriant beard and curls protected his neck, he held his bride by the  
hand,  
She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse straight locks  
descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reach'd to her feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,  
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,  
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and  
weak,  
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,  
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruis'd  
feet,  
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him some  
coarse clean clothes,  
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,

And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles;  
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north,  
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner.

## 11

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,  
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;  
Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,  
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?  
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,  
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth bather,  
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from their long  
hair,  
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,  
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the  
sun, they do not ask who seizes fast to them,  
They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending  
arch,  
They do not think whom they souse with spray.

## 12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his knife at the  
stall in the market,  
I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and break-down.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,  
Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is a great heat in the  
fire.

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their movements,  
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive arms,  
Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand so sure,  
They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

## 13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block swags  
underneath on its tied-over chain,  
The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard, steady and tall  
he stands pois'd on one leg on the string-piece.  
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens over his  
hip-band,  
His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of his hat  
away from his forehead,  
The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the black of his  
polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not stop there,  
I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as well as for-  
ward sluing,  
To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or object missing,  
Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade, what is  
that you express in your eyes?  
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my distant and  
day-long ramble,  
They rise together, they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,  
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me,  
And consider green and violet and tufted crown intentional,  
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something  
else,

And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills pretty well  
to me,  
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

## 14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,  
*Ya-honk* he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation,  
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,  
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-sill, the  
chickadee, the prairie-dog,  
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,  
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-spread wings,  
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections,  
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

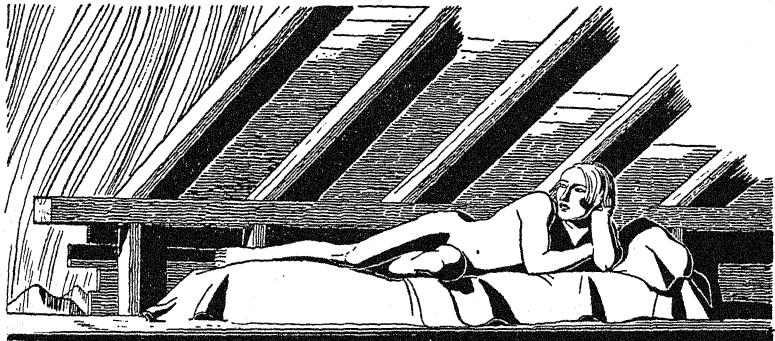
I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,  
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or woods,  
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of axes and  
mauls, and the drivers of horses,  
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me,  
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,  
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me,  
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,  
Scattering it freely forever.

## 15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,  
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane whistles  
its wild ascending lisp,  
The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanksgiving  
dinner,  
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong arm,  
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon are  
ready,

The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,  
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,  
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big wheel,  
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loaf and looks  
at the oats and rye,  
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,  
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his mother's bed-  
room;) )  
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case,  
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the manuscript;  
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,  
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;  
The quadroon girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard nods by  
the bar-room stove,  
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his beat, the  
gate-keeper marks who pass,  
The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him, though I do  
not know him;) )  
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race,  
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean on their  
rifles, some sit on logs,  
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position, levels his  
piece;  
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or levee,  
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views them  
from his saddle,  
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their partners,  
the dancers bow to each other,  
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks to the musi-  
cal rain,  
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the Huron,  
The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering moccasins  
and bead-bags for sale,  
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-shut eyes  
bent sideways,  
As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is thrown for the  
shore-going passengers,  
The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister winds it off  
in a ball, and stops now and then for the knots,  
The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago borne  
her first child,



The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing machine or in the factory or mill,  
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the reporter's lead flies swiftly over the note-book, the sign-painter is lettering with blue and gold,  
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts at his desk, the shoemaker waxes his thread,  
The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him,  
The child is baptized, the convert is making his first profession,  
The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how the white sails sparkle!)  
The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,  
The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling about the odd cent;)  
The bride unrumpled her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly,  
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,  
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck,  
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other,  
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;) The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great Secretaries,  
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms,  
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold,

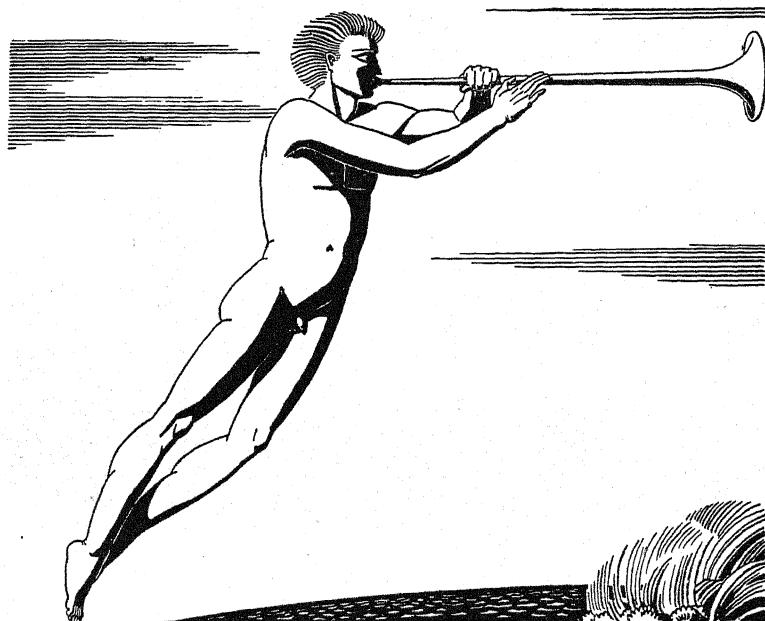
The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his cattle,  
As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice by the jing-  
ling of loose change,  
The floor-men are laying the floor, the tinners are tinning the roof, the  
masons are calling for mortar,  
In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the laborers;  
Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is gather'd, it is  
the fourth of Seventh-month, (what salutes of cannon and small  
arms!)  
Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the mower mows,  
and the winter-grain falls in the ground;  
Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole in the  
frozen surface,  
The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter strikes deep  
with his axe,  
Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-wood or pecan-  
trees,  
Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or through those  
drain'd by the Tennessee, or through those of the Arkansas,  
Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche or Altama-  
haw,  
Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great grandsons  
around them,  
In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers after their  
day's sport,  
The city sleeps and the country sleeps,  
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,  
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband sleeps by  
his wife;  
And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,  
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,  
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,  
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,  
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,  
Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with the stuff that is fine,  
One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest the same and the larg-  
est the same,

A Southerner soon as a Northerner, a planter nonchalant and hospitable down by the Ocnee I live,  
A Yankee bound by my own way ready for trade, my joints the limberest joints on earth and the sternest joints on earth,  
A Kentuckian walking the vale of the Elkhorn in my deer-skin leggings, a Louisianian or Georgian,  
A boatman over lakes or bays or along coasts, a Hoosier, Badger, Buckeye;  
At home on Kanadian snow-shoes or up in the bush, or with fishermen off Newfoundland,  
At home in the fleet of ice-boats, sailing with the rest and tacking,  
At home on the hills of Vermont or in the woods of Maine, or the Texan ranch,  
Comrade of Californians, comrade of free North-Westerners, (loving their big proportions,)  
Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade of all who shake hands and welcome to drink and meat,  
A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfulest,  
A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons,  
Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,  
A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,  
Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.  
  
I resist any thing better than my own diversity,  
Breathe the air but leave plenty after me,  
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.  
  
(The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place,  
The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see are in their place,  
The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its place.)

## 17

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they are not original with me,  
If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to nothing,  
If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they are nothing,  
If they are not just as close as they are distant they are nothing.  
This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,  
This the common air that bathes the globe.



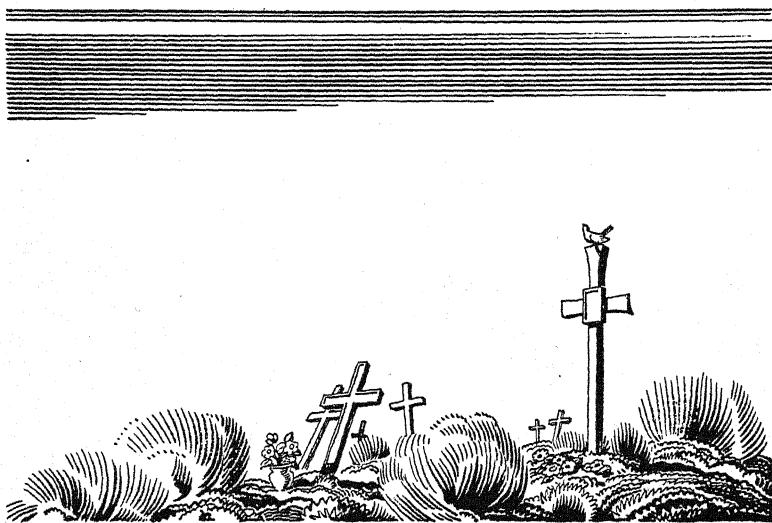
## 18

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,  
I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches for con-  
quer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?  
I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same spirit in which  
they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead,  
I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for them.

Vivas to those who have fail'd!  
And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!  
And to those themselves who sank in the sea!  
And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome heroes!  
And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes  
known!



## 19

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,  
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make appointments  
with all,

I will not have a single person slighted or left away,  
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,  
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;  
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and odor of hair,  
This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearning,  
This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,  
This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?  
Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica on the  
side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?  
Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twittering through  
the woods?  
Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,  
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

## 20

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;  
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?

What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you?

All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,  
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,  
That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow and filth.

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids, conformity goes to the fourth-remov'd,  
I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be ceremonious?

Having pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair, counsel'd with  
doctors and calculated close,  
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-corn less,  
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

I know I am solid and sound,  
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,  
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means.

I know I am deathless,  
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's compass,  
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with a burnt stick at  
night.

I know I am august,  
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood,  
I see that the elementary laws never apologize,  
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house by,  
after all.)

I exist as I am, that is enough,  
If no other in the world be aware I sit content,  
And if each and all be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is myself,  
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand or ten mil-  
lion years,  
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,  
I laugh at what you call dissolution,  
And I know the amplitude of time.

## 21

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,  
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with  
me,  
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into  
a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,  
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,  
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,  
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,  
I show that size is only development.

Have you outstrip the rest? are you the President?  
It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one, and still pass  
on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,  
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic nourishing  
night!  
Night of south winds—night of the large few stars!  
Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!  
 Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!  
 Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt!  
 Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue!  
 Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!  
 Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for my sake!  
 Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!  
 Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give love!  
 O unspeakable passionate love.



## 22

You sea! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean,  
 I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,  
 I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me,  
 We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of sight of the  
     land,  
 Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,  
 Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,  
 Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths,  
 Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet always-ready graves,  
 Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and dainty sea,  
 I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of all phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux I, extoller of hate and conciliation,  
 Extoller of amies and those that sleep in each other's arms.

I am he attesting sympathy,  
 (Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip the house that  
     supports them?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?  
 Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent,  
 My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,  
 I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging pregnancy?  
 Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd over and rectified?

I find one side a balance and the antipodal side a balance,  
 Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,  
 Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and early start.

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,  
 There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well to-day is not such a wonder,  
 The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean man or an infidel.

### 23

Endless unfolding of words of ages!  
 And mine a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.

A word of the faith that never balks,  
 Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept Time absolutely.

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes all,  
 That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all.

I accept Reality and dare not question it,  
 Materialism first and last imbuing.

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!  
 Fetch stoncrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,

This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a grammar of  
the old cartouches,

These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,

This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this is a mathe-  
matician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honors always!

Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,

I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

Less the reminders of properties told my words,

And more the reminders they of life untold, and of freedom and ex-  
trication,

And make short account of neuters and geldings, and favor men and  
women fully equip't,

And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives and them that plot  
and conspire.

## 24

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,

Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,

No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from  
them,

No more modest than immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!

Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me,

And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

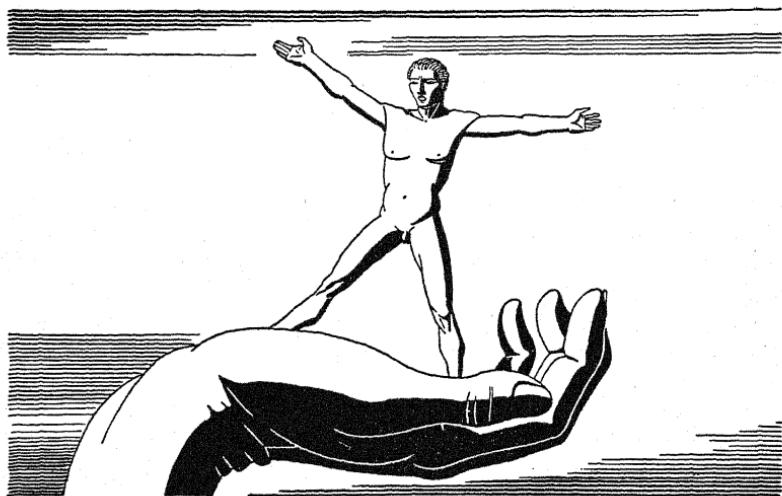
Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the current  
and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,

By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart  
of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,

Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,



Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,  
 Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,  
 And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the  
     father-stuff,  
 And of the rights of them the others are down upon,  
 Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,  
 Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,  
 Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,  
 Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I do not press my fingers across my mouth,  
 I keep as delicate around the bowels as round the head and heart,  
 Copulation is no more rank to me than death is.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,  
 Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of me is  
     a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am  
     touch'd from,  
 The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,  
 This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the spread of my own body, or any part of it,  
Translucent mould of me it shall be you!  
Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you!  
Firm masculine colter it shall be you!  
Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you!  
You my rich blood! your milky stream pale stripplings of my life!  
Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you!  
My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!  
Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of guarded duplicate eggs! it shall be you!  
Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!  
Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be you!  
Sun so generous it shall be you!  
Vapors lighting and shading my face it shall be you!  
You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you!  
Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall be you! ..  
Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving lounger in my winding paths, it shall be you!  
Hands I have taken, face I have kiss'd, mortal I have ever touch'd, it shall be you.

I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious,  
Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy,  
I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of my faintest wish,  
Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of the friendship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really be,  
A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books.

To behold the day-break!  
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,  
The air tastes good to my palate.

Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols silently rising, freshly exuding,  
Scooting obliquely high and low.

Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs,  
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

The earth by the sky staid with, the daily close of their junction,  
The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my head,  
The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!

## 25

Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would kill me,  
If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,  
We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the daybreak.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,  
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of  
worlds.

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure itself,  
It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,  
*Walt you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?*

Come now I will not be tantalized, you conceive too much of articula-  
tion,  
Do you not know O speech how the buds beneath you are folded?  
Waiting in gloom, protected by frost,  
The dirt receding before my prophetical screams,  
I underlying causes to balance them at last,  
My knowledge my live parts, it keeping tally with the meaning of all  
things,  
Happiness, (which whoever hears me let him or her set out in search  
of this day.)

My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me what I really  
am,  
Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me,  
I crowd your sleekest and best by simply looking toward you.

Writing and talking do not prove me,  
I carry the plenum of proof and every thing else in my face,  
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.

## 26

Now I will do nothing but listen,  
To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds contribute toward  
it.

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of flames,  
clack of sticks cooking my meals.

I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice,  
I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or following,  
Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the day and  
night,

Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud laugh of work-  
people at their meals,

The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones of the sick,  
The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips pronouncing a  
death-sentence,

The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the wharves, the re-  
frain of the anchor-lifters,

The ring of alarm bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of swift-streaking  
engines and hose-carts with premonitory tinkles and color'd lights,

The steam-whistle, the solid roll of the train of approaching cars,  
The slow march play'd at the head of the association marching two  
and two,

(They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped with black  
muslin.)

I hear the violoncello, ('tis the young man's heart's complaint,)

I hear the key'd cornet, it glides quickly in through my ears,  
It shakes mad-sweet pangs through my belly and breast.

I hear the chorus, it is a grand opera,  
Ah this indeed is music—this suits me.

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,  
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)  
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,  
It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd them,  
It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the indolent waves,

I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,  
 Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in fakes of  
     death,  
 At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,  
 And that we call Being.

## 27

To be in any form, what is that?  
 (Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither,)  
 If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous shell were  
     enough.

Mine is no callous shell,  
 I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop,  
 They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.

I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy,  
 To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I can stand.

## 28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,  
 Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,  
 Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,  
 My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is hardly dif-  
     ferent from myself,  
 On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,  
 Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,  
 Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,  
 Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,  
 Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,  
 Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and pasture-  
     fields,  
 Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,  
 They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the edges of  
     me,  
 No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my anger,  
 Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,  
 Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.

The sentries desert every other part of me,  
 They have left me helpless to a red marauder,  
 They all come to the headland to witness and assist against me.

'I am given up by traitors,  
 I talk wildly, I have lost my wits, I and nobody else am the greatest  
 traitor,  
 I went myself first to the headland, my own hands carried me there.

You villain touch! what are you doing? my breath is tight in its  
 throat,  
 Unclench your floodgates, you are too much for me.

## 29

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd touch!  
 Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of perpetual loan,  
 Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and vital,  
 Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

## 30

All truths wait in all things,  
 They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
 They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,  
 The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
 (What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince,  
 The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,  
 Only what nobody denies is so.)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,  
 I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,  
 And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or woman,

And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have for each other,  
 And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until it becomes  
     omnific,  
 And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.



## 31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journeywork of the stars,  
 And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg  
     of the wren,  
 And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,  
 And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,  
 And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,  
 And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,  
 And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains,  
     esculent roots,  
 And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,  
 And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,  
 But call any thing back again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,  
 In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my approach,  
 In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd bones,  
 In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold shapes,  
 In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great monsters lying low,  
 In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,  
 In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs,  
 In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,  
 In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,  
 I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the cliff.

## 32

I think I could turn and live with animals, they're so placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,  
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?

Myself moving forward then and now and forever,  
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,  
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them,  
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remembrancers,  
Picking out here one that I love, and now go with him on brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my caresses,  
Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,  
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,  
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears finely cut, flexibly moving.

His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,  
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race around and return.

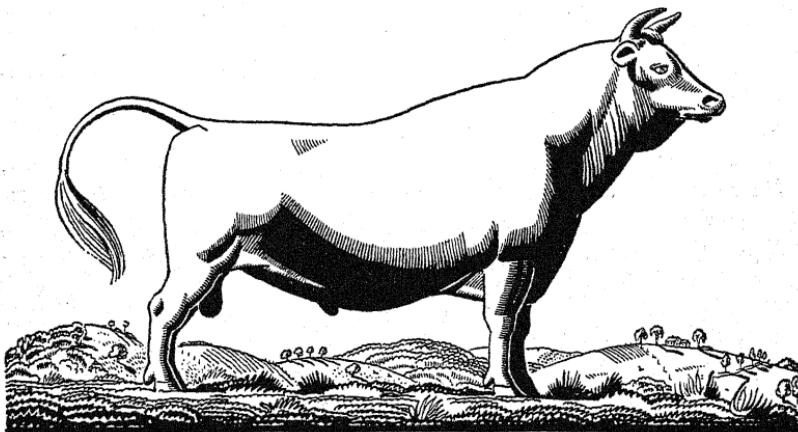
I but use you a minute, then I resign you, stallion,  
Why do I need your paces when I myself out-gallop them?  
Even as I stand or sit passing faster than you.

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at,  
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,  
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,  
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars of the morn-  
ing.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,  
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,  
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camping with lum-  
bermen,  
Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and rivulet bed,  
Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and parsnips,  
crossing savannas, trailing in forests,  
Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new purchase,  
Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat down the shal-  
low river,  
Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead, where the  
buck turns furiously at the hunter,  
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock, where the otter  
is feeding on fish,  
Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou,  
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where the beaver  
pats the mud with his paddle-shaped tail;  
Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton plant, over  
the rice in its low moist field,  
Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum and slender  
shoots from the gutters,  
Over the western persimmon, over the long-leav'd corn, over the deli-  
cate blue-flower flax,  
Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer there  
with the rest,  
Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades in the breeze;  
Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding on by low  
scragged limbs,  
Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the leaves of the  
brush,  
Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the wheat-lot,

Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve, where the great gold-bug drops through the dark,  
Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old trees and flows to the meadow,  
Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous shuddering of their hides,  
Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where andirons straddle the hearth-slab, where cobwebs fall in festoons from the rafters;  
Where trip-hammers crash, where the press is whirling its cylinders,  
Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes under its ribs,  
Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating in it myself and looking composedly down,)   
Where the life-car is drawn on the slip-noose, where the heat hatches pale-green eggs in the dented sand,  
Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never forsakes it,  
Where the steam-ship trails hind-ways its long pennant of smoke,  
Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out of the water,  
Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents,  
Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead are corrupting below;  
Where the dense-starr'd flag is borne at the head of the regiments,  
Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island,  
Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my countenance,  
Upon a door-step, upon the horse-block of hard wood outside,  
Upon the race-course, or enjoying picnics or jigs or a good game of base-ball,  
At he-festivals, with blackguard gibes, ironical license, bull-dances, drinking, laughter,  
At the cider-mill, testing the sweets of the brown mash, sucking the juice through a straw,  
At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find,  
At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings, house-raisings;  
Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles, cackles, screams, weeps,  
Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard, where the dry-stalks are scatter'd, where the brood-cow waits in the hovel,  
Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, where the stud to the mare, where the cock is treading the hen,  
Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food with short jerks,  
Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and lonesome prairie,



Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square miles  
far and near,  
Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of the long-lived  
swan is curving and winding,  
Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she laughs her  
near-human laugh,  
Where bee-hives range on a gray bench in the garden half hid by the  
high weeds,  
Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the ground with  
their heads out,  
Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery,  
Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and icicled trees,  
Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the marsh at  
night and feeds upon small crabs,  
Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm noon,  
Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the walnut-tree over  
the well,  
Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-wired leaves,  
Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical firs,  
Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon, through the  
office or public hall;  
Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign, pleas'd with the  
new and old,  
Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the handsome,

Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and talks melodiously,  
Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of the whitewash'd church,  
Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist preacher,  
    impress'd seriously at the camp-meeting;  
Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole forenoon,  
    flatting the flesh of my nose on the thick plate glass,  
Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up to the clouds,  
    or down a lane or along the beach,  
My right and left arms round the sides of two friends, and I in the middle;  
Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy, (behind me  
    he rides at the drape of the day,)  
Far from the settlements studying the print of animals' feet, or the moccasin print,  
By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a feverish patient,  
Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining with a candle;  
Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure,  
Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and fickle as any,  
Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him,  
Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from me a long while,  
Walking the old hills of Judæa with the beautiful gentle God by my side,  
Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the stars,  
Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and the diameter of eighty thousand miles,  
Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-balls like the rest,  
Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother in its belly,  
Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,  
Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,  
I tread day and night such roads.

I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,  
And look at quintillions ripen'd and look at quintillions green.

I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul,  
My course runs below the soundings of plummets.

I help myself to material and immaterial,  
No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me.

I anchor my ship for a little while only,  
My messengers continually cruise away or bring their returns to me.

I go hunting polar furs and the seal, leaping chasms with a pike-pointed staff, clinging to toppling of brittle and blue.

I ascend to the foretruck,  
I take my place late at night in the crow's-nest,  
We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough,  
Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the wonderful beauty,  
The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them, the scenery is plain in all directions,  
The white-topt mountains show in the distance, I fling out my fancies toward them,  
We are approaching some great battle-field in which we are soon to be engaged,  
We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment, we pass with still feet and caution,  
Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and ruin'd city,  
The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the living cities of the globe.

I am a free companion, I bivouac by invading watchfires,  
I turn the bridegroom out of bed and stay with the bride myself,  
I tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of the stairs,  
They fetch my man's body up dripping and drown'd.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,  
The courage of present times and all times,  
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the steamship, and Death chasing it up and down the storm,  
How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was faithful of days and faithful of nights,  
And chalk'd in large letters on a board, *Be of good cheer, we will not desert you;*  
How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three days and would not give it up,  
How he saved the drifting company at last,

How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated from the side  
of their prepared graves,  
How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and the sharp-  
lipp'd unshaved men;  
All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it becomes mine,  
I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.

The disdain and calmness of martyrs,  
The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry wood, her  
children gazing on,  
The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the fence, blowing,  
cover'd with sweat,  
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck, the murderous  
luckshot and the bullets,  
All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,  
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the marksmen,  
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd with the ooze  
of my skin,  
I fall on the weeds and stones,  
The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,  
Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head with whip-  
stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments.  
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the  
wounded person,  
My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,  
Tumbling walls buried me in their debris,  
Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts of my comrades,  
I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels,  
They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly lift me forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt, the pervading hush is for my  
sake,  
Painless after all I lie exhausted but not so unhappy,  
White and beautiful are the faces around me, the heads are bared of  
their fire-caps,

The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches.

Distant and dead resuscitate,  
They show as the dial or move as the hands of me, I am the clock myself.

I am an old artillerist, I tell of my fort's bombardment,  
I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers,  
Again the attacking cannon, mortars,  
Again to my listening ears the cannon responsive.

I take part, I see and hear the whole,  
The cries, curses, roar, the plaudits for well-aim'd shots,  
The ambulanza slowly passing trailing its red drip,  
Workmen searching after damages, making indispensable repairs,  
The fall of grenades through the rent roof, the fan-shaped explosion,  
The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high in the air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general, he furiously waves  
with his hand,  
He gasps through the clot *Mind not me—mind—the entrenchments.*

### 34

Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth,  
(I tell not the fall of Alamo,  
Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,  
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo,)  
'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and twelve  
young men.

Retreating they had form'd in a hollow square with their baggage for  
breastworks,  
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, nine times their  
number, was the price they took in advance,  
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,  
They treated for an honorable capitulation, receiv'd writing and seal,  
gave up their arms and march'd back prisoners of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers,  
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,  
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affectionate,  
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,  
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second First-day morning they were brought out in squads and  
massacred, it was beautiful early summer,  
The work commenced about five o'clock and was over by eight.

None obey'd the command to kneel,  
Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark and straight,  
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living and dead  
lay together,  
The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers saw them  
there,  
Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,  
These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the blunts of  
muskets  
A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two more came  
to release him,  
The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.

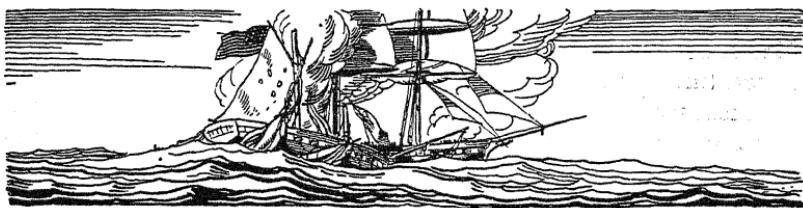
At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies;  
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve young  
men.

## 35

Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight?  
Would you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?  
List to the yarn, as my grandmother's father the sailor told it to me.

Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you, (said he,)  
His was the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher or truer, and  
never was, and never will be;  
Along the lower'd eve he came horribly raking us.

We closed with him, the yards entangled, the cannon touch'd,  
My captain lash'd fast with his own hands.



We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots under the water,  
On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the first fire,  
killing all around and blowing up overhead.

Fighting at sun-down, fighting at dark,  
Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up, our leaks on the gain,  
and five feet of water reported,  
The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the after-hold  
to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine is now stopt by the sentinels,  
They see so many strange faces they do not know whom to trust.

Our frigate takes fire,  
The other asks if we demand quarter?  
If our colors are struck and the fighting done?

Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of my little captain,  
*We have not struck*, he composedly cries, *we have just begun our part of the fighting.*

Only three guns are in use,  
One is directed by the captain himself against the enemy's main-mast,  
Two well serv'd with grape and canister silence his musketry and clear his decks.

The tops alone second the fire of this little battery, especially the main-top,  
They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease,  
The leaks gain fast on the pumps, the fire eats toward the powder-magazine.

One of the pumps has been shot away, it is generally thought we are sinking.

Serene stands the little captain,  
He is not hurried, his voice is neither high nor low,  
His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

Toward twelve there in the beams of the moon they surrender to us.

## 36

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,  
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness,  
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to pass to the one we have conquer'd,  
The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders through a countenance white as a sheet,  
Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,  
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and carefully curl'd whiskers,  
The flames spite of all that can be done flickering aloft and below,  
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for duty,  
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs of flesh upon the masts and spars,  
Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the soothe of waves,  
Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-parcels, strong scent,  
A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining,  
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and fields by the shore, death-messages given in charge to survivors,  
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,  
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and long, dull, tapering groan,  
These so, these irretrievable.

## 37

You laggards there on guard! look to your arms!  
In at the conquer'd doors they crowd! I am possess'd!  
Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,  
See myself in prison shaped like another man,  
And feel the dull unintermitt'd pain,

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and keep watch,  
It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd to him  
and walk by his side,  
(I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one with sweat on  
my twitching lips.)

Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too, and am tried  
and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp but I also lie at the last gasp,  
My face is ash-color'd, my sinews gnarl, away from me people retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me and I am embodied in them,  
I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.

## 38

Enough! enough! enough!  
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back!  
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers, dreams, gap-  
ing,  
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults!  
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the bludgeons  
and hammers!  
That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion and  
bloody crowning!

I remember now,  
I resume the overstaid fraction,  
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it, or to any  
graves,  
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an average un-  
ending procession,  
Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,  
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,  
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of years.

Eleves, I salute you! come forward!  
Continue your annotations, continue your questionings.

## 39

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?  
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?

Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors? is he Kanadian?  
Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon, California?  
The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor from the sea?

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,  
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them, stay with  
them.

Behavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass, uncomb'd  
head, laughter, and naivetè,  
Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes and eman-  
tions,  
They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,  
They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath, they fly out of  
the glance of his eyes.

## 40

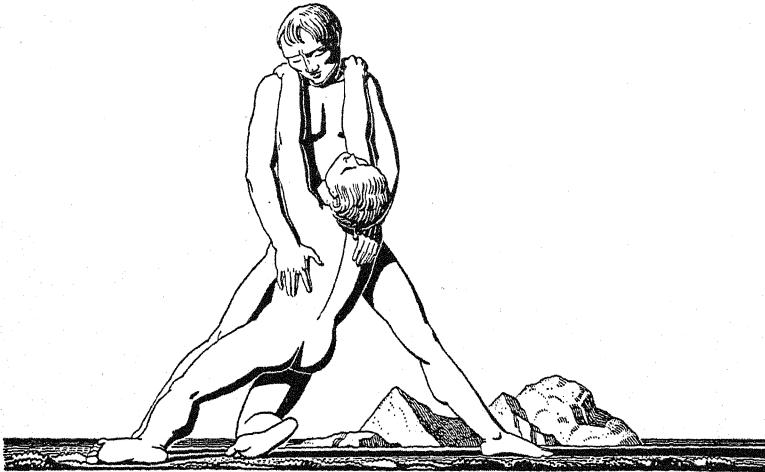
Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—lie over!  
You light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,  
Say, old top-knot, what do you want?

Man or woman, I might tell how I like you, but cannot,  
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in you, but cannot,  
And might tell that pining I have, that pulse of my nights and days.

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,  
When I give I give myself.

You there, impotent, loose in the knees,  
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you,



Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,  
I am not to be denied, I compel, I have stores plenty and to spare,  
And any thing I have I bestow.

I do not ask who you are, that is not important to me,  
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,  
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,  
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler babes,  
(This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics.)

To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob of the door,  
Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed,  
Let the physician and the priest go home.

I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will,  
O despainer, here is my neck,  
By God, you shall not go down! hang your whole weight upon me.  
I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,  
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,  
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,  
Not doubt, not disease shall dare to lay finger upon you,  
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to myself,  
And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell you is so.

## 41

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs,  
And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.

I heard what was said of the universe,  
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years;  
It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,  
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,  
Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,  
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson,  
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,  
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the crucifix  
engraved,  
With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and image,  
Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,  
Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,  
(They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to rise and fly  
and sing for themselves,)  
Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself, bestow-  
ing them freely on each man and woman I see,  
Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,  
Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up sleeves driv-  
ing the mallet and chisel,  
Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of smoke or  
a hair on the back of my hand just as curious as any revelation,  
Lads aholt of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less to me  
than the gods of the antique wars,  
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,  
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths, their white fore-  
heads whole and unhurt out of the flames;  
By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple interceding for  
every person born,

Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty angels  
     with shirts bagg'd out at their waists,  
 The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past and to  
     come,  
 Selling all he possesses, traveling on foot to fee lawyers for his  
     brother and sit by him while he is tried for forgery;  
 What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod about me,  
     and not filling the square rod then,  
 The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,  
 Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,  
 The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time to be one  
     of the supremes,  
 The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good as the  
     best, and be as prodigious;  
 By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator,  
 Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the shadows.

## 42

A call in the midst of the crowd,  
 My own voice, orotund sweeping and final.

Come my children,  
 Come my boys and girls, my women, household and intimates,  
 Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd his prelude on  
     the reeds within.

Easily written loose-finger'd chords—I feel the thrum of your climax  
     and close.

My head slues round on my neck,  
 Music rolls, but not from the organ,  
 Folks are around me, but they are no household of mine.

Ever the hard unsunk ground,  
 Ever the eaters and drinkers, ever the upward and downward sun,  
     ever the air and the ceaseless tides,  
 Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing, wicked, real,  
 Ever the old inexplicable query, ever that thorn'd thumb, that breath  
     of itches and thirsts,

Ever the vexer's *hoot! hoot!* till we find where the sly one hides and  
bring him forth,  
Ever love, ever the sobbing liquid of life,  
Ever the bandage under the chin, ever the trestles of death.

Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking,  
To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,  
Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast never once going,  
Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff for payment  
receiving,  
A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens,  
Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars, markets, news-  
papers, schools,  
The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships, factories, stocks,  
stores, real estate and personal estate.

The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and tail'd  
coats,  
I am aware who they are, (they are positively not worms or fleas,) I  
acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest and shallowest  
is deathless with me,  
What I do and say the same waits for them,  
Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders in them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism,  
Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less,  
And would fetch you whoever you are flush with myself.

Not words of routine this song of mine,  
But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring;  
This printed and bound book—but the printer and the printing-office  
boy?  
The well-taken photographs—but your wife or friend close and solid  
in your arms?  
The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her turrets—but  
the pluck of the captain and engineers?  
In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture—but the host and  
hostess, and the look out of their eyes?  
The sky up there—yet here or next door, or across the way?

The saints and sages in history—but you yourself?  
Sermons, creeds, theology—but the fathomless human brain,  
And what is reason? and what is love? and what is life?

## 43

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,  
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,  
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and  
modern,  
Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years,  
Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting the sun,  
Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powowing with sticks in  
the circle of obis,  
Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the idols,  
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt and aus-  
tere in the woods a gymnosophist,  
Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas admirant,  
minding the Koran,  
Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone and knife,  
beating the serpent-skin drum,  
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified, knowing  
assuredly that he is divine,  
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting patiently  
in a pew,  
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like till  
my spirit arouses me,  
Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement and  
land,  
Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.  
  
One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and talk like a  
man leaving charges before a journey.  
  
Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,  
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd, atheistical,  
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt, despair  
and unbelief.  
  
How the flukes splash!  
How they contort rapid as lightning, with spasms and spouts of  
blood!

Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers,  
I take my place among you as much as among any,  
The past is the push of you, me, all, precisely the same,  
And what is yet untried and afterward is for you, me, all precisely  
the same.

I do not know what is untried and afterward,  
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient, and cannot fail.

Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is consider'd, not a  
single one can it fail.

It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,  
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,  
Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then drew back  
and was never seen again,  
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels it with  
bitterness worse than gall,  
Nor him in the poor house tubercled by rum and the bad disorder,  
Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd, nor the brutish koboo  
call'd the ordure of humanity,  
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to slip in,  
Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of the earth,  
Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads of myriads  
that inhabit them,  
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

## 44

It is time to explain myself—let us stand up.

What is known I strip away,  
I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown.

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity indicate?

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers,  
There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,  
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,  
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother, my  
sister?

I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous upon me,  
All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with lamentation,  
(What have I to do with lamentation?)

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to  
be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,  
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the steps,  
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,  
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there,  
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,  
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,  
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen,  
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,  
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,  
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,  
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,  
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,  
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it  
with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,  
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.



45

O span of youth, ever-push'd elasticity.  
O manhood, balanced, florid and full.

My lovers suffocate me,  
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,  
Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked to me at  
night,  
Crying by day *Ahoi!* from the rocks of the river, swinging and chirp-  
ing over my head,  
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush,  
Lighting on every moment of my life,  
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,  
Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving them to  
be mine.

Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace of dying days!

Every condition promulgates not only itself, it promulgates what grows  
after and out of itself,  
And the dark hush promulgates as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,  
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the rim of  
the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,  
Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,  
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,  
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,  
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces,  
    were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would not  
    avail in the long run,  
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,  
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues, do not  
    hazard the span or make it impatient,  
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,  
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,  
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,  
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there.

## 46

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never measured  
and never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)  
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from the  
    woods,  
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,  
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,  
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,  
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,  
My left hand hooking you round the waist,  
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the public  
    road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,  
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not know,  
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds dear son, and I will mine, and let us hasten forth,  
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of your hand on  
my hip,  
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,  
For after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the crowded  
heaven,  
And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders of those orbs,*  
*and the pleasure and knowledge of every thing in them, shall we*  
*be fill'd and satisfied then?*  
And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and continue*  
*beyond.*

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,  
I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for yourself.

Sit a while dear son,  
Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,  
But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes, I kiss  
you with a good-by kiss and open the gate for your egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,  
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,  
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every mo-  
ment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,  
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,  
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me, shout, and  
laughingly dash with your hair.

I am the teacher of athletes,  
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width  
    of my own,  
He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through derived power,  
    but in his own right,  
Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,  
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,  
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than sharp steel cuts,  
First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a skiff, to sing  
    a song or play on the banjo,  
Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with small-pox over  
    all latherers,  
And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?  
I follow you whoever you are from the present hour,  
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the time while I  
    wait for a boat,  
(It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of you,  
Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd.)

I swear I will never again mention love or death inside a house,  
And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to him or her  
    who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-shore,  
The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of waves  
    a key,  
The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,  
But roughs and little children better than they.  
The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,  
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take me with  
    him all day,

The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound of my voice,  
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and seamen  
and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,  
On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and I do not fail  
them,  
On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that know me seek  
me.

My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone in his  
blanket,  
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his wagon,  
The young mother and old mother comprehend me,  
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget where  
they are,  
They and all would resume what I have told them.

## 48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,  
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,  
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own  
funeral drest in his shroud,  
And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the earth,  
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the  
learning of all times,  
And there is no trade or employment but the young man following  
it may become a hero,  
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd uni-  
verse,  
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and com-  
posed before a million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,  
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and  
about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in  
the least,  
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?  
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each mo-  
ment then,  
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in  
the glass,  
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd  
by God's name,  
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go  
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

## 49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to  
try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes,  
I see the elder-hand pressing receiving supporting,  
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,  
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that does  
not offend me,  
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,  
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons.

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,  
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,  
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and promotions,  
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing?

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,  
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the southing twilight,  
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black stems that decay  
in the muck,  
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,  
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams reflected,  
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or  
small.

50

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it is in me.

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body becomes,  
I sleep—I sleep long.

I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid,  
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,  
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me.

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my brothers and  
sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?  
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—  
it is Happiness.

51

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,  
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?  
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,  
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute  
longer.)

Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through with his supper?

Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?

## 52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,  
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,  
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.



## CHILDREN OF ADAM

### TO THE GARDEN THE WORLD

To the garden the world anew ascending,  
Potent mates, daughters, sons, preluding,  
The love, the life of their bodies, meaning and being,  
Curious here behold my resurrection after slumber,  
The revolving cycles in their wide sweep having brought me again,  
Amorous, mature, all beautiful to me, all wondrous,  
My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through them, for  
    reasons, most wondrous,  
Existing I peer and penetrate still,  
Content with the present, content with the past,  
By my side or back of me Eve following,  
Or in front, and I following her just the same.

## FROM PENT-UP ACHING RIVERS

FROM pent-up aching rivers,  
From that of myself without which I were nothing,  
From what I am determin'd to make illustrious, even if I stand sole  
among men,  
From my own voice resonant, singing the phallus,  
Singing the song of procreation,  
Singing the need of superb children and therein superb grown people,  
Singing the muscular urge and the blending,  
Singing the bedfellow's song, (O resistless yearning!  
O for any and each the body correlative attracting!  
O for you whoever you are your correlative body! O it, more than  
all else, you delighting!)  
From the hungry gnaw that eats me night and day,  
From native moments, from bashful pains, singing them,  
Seeking something yet unfound though I have diligently sought it  
many a long year,  
Singing the true song of the soul fitful at random,  
Renaissant with grossest Nature or among animals,  
Of that, of them and what goes with them my poems informing,  
Of the smell of apples and lemons, of the pairing of birds,  
Of the wet of woods, of the lapping of waves,  
Of the mad pushes of waves upon the land, I them chanting,  
The overture lightly sounding, the strain anticipating,  
The welcome nearness, the sight of the perfect body,  
The swimmer swimming naked in the bath, or motionless on his back  
lying and floating,  
The female form approaching, I pensive, love-flesh tremulous aching,  
The divine list for myself or you or for any one making,  
The face, the limbs, the index from head to foot, and what it arouses,  
The mystic deliria, the madness amorous, the utter abandonment,  
(Hark close and still what I now whisper to you,  
I love you, O you entirely possess me,  
O that you and I escape from the rest and go utterly off, free and law-  
less,  
Two hawks in the air, two fishes swimming in the sea not more law-  
less than we;)  
The furious storm through me careering, I passionately trembling,  
The oath of the inseparableness of two together, of the woman that  
loves me and whom I love more than my life, that oath swearing,

(O I willingly stake all for you,  
O let me be lost if it must be so!  
O you and I! what is it to us what the rest do or think?  
What is all else to us? only that we enjoy each other and exhaust  
each other if it must be so;) From the master, the pilot I yield the vessel to,  
The general commanding me, commanding all, from him permission  
taking,  
From time the programme hastening, (I have loiter'd too long as it  
is,) From sex, from the warp and from the woof,  
From privacy, from frequent repinings alone,  
From plenty of persons near and yet the right person not near,  
From the soft sliding of hands over me and thrusting of fingers  
through my hair and beard,  
From the long sustain'd kiss upon the mouth or bosom,  
From the close pressure that makes me or any man drunk, fainting  
with excess,  
From what the divine husband knows, from the work of fatherhood,  
From exultation, victory and relief from the bedfellow's embrace in  
the night,  
From the act-poems of eyes, hands, hips and bosoms,  
From the cling of the trembling arm,  
From the bending curve and the clinch,  
From side by side the pliant coverlet off-throwing,  
From the one so unwilling to have me leave, and me just as unwilling  
to leave,  
(Yet a moment O tender waiter, and I return,) From the hour of shining stars and dropping dews,  
From the night a moment I emerging flitting out,  
Celebrate you act divine and you children prepared for,  
And you stalwart loins.

### I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC

I SING the body electric,  
The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them,  
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,  
And dis corrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of the  
soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves?

And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who defile the dead?

And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?

And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?

## 2

The love of the body of man or woman balks account, the body itself balks account,

That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is perfect.

The expression of the face balks account,

But the expression of a well-made man appears not only in his face, It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists,

It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist and knees, dress does not hide him,

The strong sweet quality he has strikes through the cotton and broad-cloth,

To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps more, You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and shoulder-side.

The sprawl and fulness of babes, the bosoms and heads of women, the folds of their dress, their style as we pass in the street, the contour of their shape downwards,

The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as he swims through the transparent green-shine, or lies with his face up and rolls silently to fro in the heave of the water,

The bending forward and backward of rowers in row-boats, the horse-man in his saddle,

Girls, mothers, house-keepers, in all their performances,

The group of laborers seated at noon-time with their open dinner kettles, and their wives waiting,

The female soothing a child, the farmer's daughter in the garden or cow-yard,

The young fellow hoeing corn, the sleigh-driver driving his six horses through the crowd,

The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite grown, lusty, good-natured, native-born, out on the vacant lot at sundown after work,

The coats and caps thrown down, the embrace of love and resistance,  
The upper-hold and under-hold, the hair rumpled over and blinding  
the eyes;  
The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play of masculine  
muscle through clean-setting trowsers and waist-straps,  
The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell strikes sud-  
denly again, and the listening on the alert,  
The natural, perfect, varied attitudes, the bent head, the curv'd neck  
and the counting;  
Such-like I love—I loosen myself, pass freely, am at the mother's  
breast with the little child,  
Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march in line with  
the firemen, and pause, listen, count.

## 3

I knew a man, a common farmer, the father of five sons,  
And in them the fathers of sons, and in them the fathers of sons.

This man was of wonderful vigor, calmness, beauty of person,  
The shape of his head, the pale yellow and white of his hair and  
beard, the immeasurable meaning of his black eyes, the richness  
and breadth of his manners,  
These I used to go and visit him to see, he was wise also,  
He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old, his sons were mas-  
sive, clean, bearded, tan-faced, handsome,  
They and his daughters loved him, all who saw him loved him,  
They did not love him by allowance, they loved him with personal  
love,  
He drank water only, the blood show'd like scarlet through the clear-  
brown skin of his face,  
He was a frequent gunner and fisher, he sail'd his boat himself, he  
had a fine one presented to him by a ship-joiner, he had fowling-  
pieces presented to him by men that loved him,  
When he went with his five sons and many grand-sons to hunt or  
fish, you would pick him out as the most beautiful and vigorous  
of the gang,  
You would wish long and long to be with him, you would wish to  
sit by him in the boat that you and he might touch each other.



## 4

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like is enough,  
 To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,  
 To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is  
     enough,  
 To pass among them or touch any one, or rest my arm ever so lightly  
     round his or her neck for a moment, what is this then?  
 I do not ask any more delight, I swim in it as in a sea.

There is something in staying close to men and women and looking  
     on them, and in the contact and odor of them, that pleases the  
     soul well,

All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

## 5

This is the female form,  
 A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,  
 It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction,  
 I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a helpless vapor,  
     all falls aside but myself and it,  
 Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth, and what was  
     expected of heaven or fear'd of hell, are now consumed,  
 Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it, the response like-  
     wise ungovernable,  
 Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands all diffused,  
     mine too diffused,  
 Ebb stung by the flow and flow stung by the ebb, love-flesh swelling  
     and deliciously aching,

Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering jelly of  
 love, white-blow and delirious juice,  
 Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly into the prostrate  
 dawn,  
 Undulating into the willing and yielding day,  
 Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-flesh'd day.

This the nucleus—after the child is born of woman, man is born of  
 woman,  
 This the bath of birth, this the merge of small and large, and the out-  
 let again.

Be not ashamed women, your privilege encloses the rest, and is the  
 exit of the rest,  
 You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the soul.

The female contains all qualities and tempers them,  
 She is in her place and moves with perfect balance,  
 She is all things duly veil'd, she is both passive and active,  
 She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and sons as well as  
 daughters.

As I see my soul reflected in Nature,  
 As I see through a mist, One with inexpressible completeness, sanity,  
 beauty,  
 See the bent head and arms folded over the breast, the Female I see.

## 6

The male is not less the soul nor more, he too is in his place,  
 He too is all qualities, he is action and power,  
 The flush of the known universe is in him,  
 Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance become him well,  
 The wildest largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow that is utmost  
 become him well, pride is for him,  
 The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent to the soul,  
 Knowledge becomes him, he likes it always, he brings every thing to  
 the test of himself,  
 Whatever the survey, whatever the sea and the sail he strikes sound-  
 ings at last only here,  
 (Where else does he strike soundings except here?)

The man's body is sacred and the woman's body is sacred,  
 No matter who it is, it is sacred—is it the meanest one in the laborers'  
 gang?

Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed on the wharf?  
 Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the well-off, just as  
 much as you,  
 Each has his or her place in the procession.

(All is a procession,  
 The universe is a procession with measured and perfect motion.)

Do you know so much yourself that you call the meanest ignorant?  
 Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and he or she has  
 no right to a sight?  
 Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse float, and  
 the soil is on the surface, and water runs and vegetation sprouts,  
 For you only, and not for him and her?

## 7

A man's body at auction,  
 (For before the war I often go to the slave-mart and watch the sale,)  
 I help the auctioneer, the sloven does not half know his business.

Gentlemen look on this wonder,  
 Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high enough for it,  
 For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years without one an-  
 imal or plant,  
 For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

In this head the all-baffling brain,  
 In it and below it the makings of heroes.

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white, they are cunning in tendon  
 and nerve,  
 They shall be stript that you may see them.

Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,  
 Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh not flabby,  
 good-sized arms and legs,  
 And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,  
 The same old blood! the same red-running blood!  
 There swells and jets a heart, there all passions, desires, reachings,  
 aspirations,  
 (Do you think they are not there because they are not express'd in  
 parlors and lecture-rooms?)

This is not only one man, this the father of those who shall be fathers  
 in their turns,  
 In him the start of populous states and rich republics,  
 Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments and en-  
 joyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his offspring  
 through the centuries?  
 (Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you could trace  
 back through the centuries?)

## 8

A woman's body at auction,  
 She too is not only herself, she is the teeming mother of mothers,  
 She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the mothers.

Have you ever loved the body of a woman?  
 Have you ever loved the body of a man?  
 Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all in all nations and  
 times all over the earth?

If any thing is sacred the human body is sacred,  
 And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted,  
 And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body, is more  
 beautiful than the most beautiful face.  
 Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? or the fool  
 that corrupted her own live body?  
 For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal themselves.

## 9

O my body! I dare not desert the likes of you in other men and  
 women, nor the likes of the parts of you,  
 I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the likes of the soul,  
 (and that they are the soul,)

I believe the likes of you shall stand or fall with my poems, and that  
they are my poems,  
Man's, woman's, child's, youth's, wife's, husband's, mother's, father's,  
young man's, young woman's poems,  
Head, neck, hair, ears, drop and tympan of the ears,  
Eyes, eye-fringes, iris of the eye, eyebrows, and the waking or sleep-  
ing of the lids,  
Mouth, tongue, lips, teeth, roof of the mouth, jaws, and the jaw-  
hinges,  
Nose, nostrils of the nose, and the partition,  
Cheeks, temples, forehead, chin, throat, back of the neck, neck-slue,  
Strong shoulders, manly beard, scapula, hind-shoulders, and the  
ample side-round of the chest,  
Upper-arm, armpit, elbow-socket, lower-arm, arm-sinews, arm-bones,  
Wrist and wrist-joints, hand, palm, knuckles, thumb, forefinger, fin-  
ger-joints, finger-nails,  
Broad breast-front, curling hair of the breast, breast-bone, breast-side,  
Ribs, belly, backbone, joints of the backbone,  
Hips, hip-sockets, hip-strength, inward and outward round, manballs,  
man-root,  
Strong set of thighs, well carrying the trunk above,  
Leg-fibres, knee, knee-pan, upper-leg, under-leg,  
Ankles, instep, foot-ball, toes, toe-joints, the heel;  
All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the belongings of my or your  
body or of any one's body, male or female,  
The lung-sponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels sweet and clean,  
The brain in its folds inside the skull-frame,  
Sympathies, heart-valves, palate-valves, sexuality, maternity,  
Womanhood and all that is a woman, and the man that comes from  
woman,  
The womb, the teats, nipples, breast-milk, tears, laughter, weeping,  
love-looks, love-perturbations and risings,  
The voice, articulation, language, whispering, shouting aloud,  
Food, drink, pulse, digestion, sweat, sleep, walking, swimming,  
Poise on the hips, leaping, reclining, embracing, arm-curving and  
tightening,  
The continual changes of the flex of the mouth, and around the eyes,  
The skin, the sunburnt shade, freckles, hair,  
The curious sympathy one feels when feeling with the hand the naked  
meat of the body,  
The circling rivers the breath, and breathing it in and out,

The beauty of the waist, and thence of the hips, and thence downward toward the knees,  
 The thin red jellies within you or within me, the bones and the marrow in the bones,  
 The exquisite realization of health;  
 O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only, but of the soul,  
 O I say now these are the soul!



#### A WOMAN WAITS FOR ME

A WOMAN waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,  
 Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of the right man were lacking.

Sex contains all, bodies, souls,  
 Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,  
 Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the seminal milk,  
 All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves, beauties, delights of the earth,  
 All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the earth,  
 These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and justifications of itself.

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex,  
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.

Now I will dismiss myself from impassive women,  
I will go stay with her who waits for me, and with those women that are warm-blooded and sufficient for me,  
I see that they understand me and do not deny me,  
I see that they are worthy of me, I will be the robust husband of those women.

They are not one jot less than I am,  
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,  
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,  
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike, retreat,  
advance, resist, defend themselves,  
They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear, well-possess'd of themselves.

I draw you close to me, you women,  
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,  
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own sake, but for others' sakes,  
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,  
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.

It is I, you women, I make my way,  
I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable, but I love you,  
I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,  
I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these States, I press  
with slow rude muscle,  
I brace myself effectually, I listen to no entreaties,  
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long accumulated within  
me.

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,  
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,  
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of me and America,  
The drops I distil upon you shall grow fierce and athletic girls, new  
artists, musicians, and singers,  
The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in their turn,  
I shall demand perfect men and women out of my love-spendings,

I shall expect them to interpenetrate with others, as I and you inter-penetrates now,  
I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of them, as I count on  
the fruits of the gushing showers I give now,  
I shall look for loving crops from the birth, life, death, immortality, I  
plant so lovingly now.

## SPONTANEOUS ME

SPONTANEOUS me, Nature,  
The loving day, the mounting sun, the friend I am happy with,  
The arm of my friend hanging idly over my shoulder,  
The hillside whiten'd with blossoms of the mountain ash,  
The same late in autumn, the hues of red, yellow, drab, purple, and  
light and dark green,  
The rich coverlet of the grass, animals and birds, the private un-trimm'd bank, the primitive apples, the pebble-stones,  
Beautiful dripping fragments, the negligent list of one after another  
as I happen to call them to me or think of them,  
The real poems, (what we call poems being merely pictures,)  
The poems of the privacy of the night, and of men like me,  
This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry, and that all  
men carry,  
(Know once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men like me,  
are our lusty lurking masculine poems,)  
Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yielding, love-climbers, and  
the climbing sap,  
Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of love, breasts  
of love, bellies press'd and glued together with love,  
Earth of chaste love, life that is only life after love,  
The body of my love, the body of the woman I love, the body of the  
man, the body of the earth,  
Soft forenoon airs that blow from the south-west,  
The hairy wild-bee that murmurs and hankers up and down, that  
gripes the full-grown lady-flower, curves upon her with amorous  
firm legs, takes his will of her, and holds himself tremulous and  
tight till he is satisfied;  
The wet of woods through the early hours,  
Two sleepers at night lying close together as they sleep, one with an  
arm slanting down across and below the waist of the other,  
The smell of apples, aromas from crush'd sage-plant, mint, birch-bark,

The boy's longings, the glow and pressure as he confides to me what he was dreaming,  
The dead leaf whirling its spiral whirl and falling still and content to the ground,  
The no-form'd stings that sights, people, objects, sting me with,  
The hubb'd sting of myself, stinging me as much as it ever can any one,  
The sensitive, orbic, underlapp'd brothers, that only privileged feelers may be intimate where they are,  
The curious roamer the hand roaming all over the body, the bashful withdrawing of flesh where the fingers soothingly pause and edge themselves,  
The limpid liquid within the young man,  
The vex'd corrosion so pensive and so painful,  
The torment, the irritable tide that will not be at rest,  
The like of the same I feel, the like of the same in others,  
The young man that flushes and flushes, and the young woman that flushes and flushes,  
The young man that wakes deep at night, the hot hand seeking to repress what would master him,  
The mystic amorous night, the strange half-welcome pangs, visions, sweats,  
The pulse pounding through palms and trembling encircling fingers, the young man all color'd, red, ashamed, angry;  
The souse upon me of my lover the sea, as I lie willing and naked,  
The merriment of the twin babies that crawl over the grass in the sun, the mother never turning her vigilant eyes from them,  
The walnut-trunk, the walnut-husks, and the ripening or ripen'd long-round walnuts,  
The continence of vegetables, birds, animals,  
The consequent meanness of me should I skulk or find myself indecent, while birds and animals never once skulk or find themselves indecent,  
The great chastity of paternity, to match the great chastity of maternity,  
The oath of procreation I have sworn, my Adamic and fresh daughters,  
The greed that eats me day and night with hungry gnaw, till I saturate what shall produce boys to fill my place when I am through,  
The wholesome relief, repose, content,  
And this bunch pluck'd at random from myself, It has done its work—I toss it carelessly to fall where it may.

## ONE HOUR TO MADNESS AND JOY

ONE hour to madness and joy! O furious! O confine me not!  
(What is this that frees me so in storms?

What do my shouts amid lightnings and raging winds mean?)

O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other man!  
O savage and tender achings! (I bequeath them to you, my children,  
I tell them to you, for reasons, O bridegroom and bride.)

O to be yielded to you whoever you are, and you to be yielded to me in  
defiance of the world!

O to return to Paradise! O bashful and feminine!

O to draw you to me, to plant on you for the first time the lips of a  
determin'd man.

O the puzzle, the thrice-tied knot, the deep and dark pool, all untied  
and illumin'd!

O to speed where there is space enough and air enough at last!

To be absolv'd from previous ties and conventions, I from mine and  
you from yours!

To find a new unthought-of nonchalance with the best of Nature!

To have the gag remov'd from one's mouth!

To have the feeling to-day or any day I am sufficient as I am.

O something unprov'd! something in a trance!

To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds!

To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless and dangerous!

To court destruction with taunts, with invitations!

To ascend, to leap to the heavens of the love indicated to me!

To rise thither with my inebrate soul!

To be lost if it must be so!

To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fulness and freedom!

With one brief hour of madness and joy.

## OUT OF THE ROLLING OCEAN THE CROWD

Out of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop gently to me,

*Whispering I love you, before long I die,*

*I have travell'd a long way merely to look on you to touch you,*

*For I could not die till I once look'd on you,*

*For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.*

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,  
 Return in peace to the ocean my love,  
 I too am part of that ocean my love, we are not so much separated,  
 Behold the great rondure, the cohesion of all, how perfect!  
 But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us,  
 As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot carry us diverse for-  
 ever;  
 Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute the air, the ocean  
 and the land,  
 Every day at sundown for your dear sake my love.



#### AGES AND AGES RETURNING AT INTERVALS

AGES and ages returning at intervals,  
 Undestroy'd, wandering immortal,  
 Lusty, phallic, with the potent original loins, perfectly sweet,  
 I, chanter of Adamic songs,  
 Through the new garden the West, the great cities calling,  
 Deliriate, thus prelude what is generated, offering these, offering my-  
 self,  
 Bathing myself, bathing my songs in Sex,  
 Offspring of my loins.

## WE TWO, HOW LONG WE WERE FOOL'D

WE two, how long we were fool'd,  
Now transmuted, we swiftly escape as Nature escapes,  
We are Nature, long have we been absent, but now we return,  
We become plants, trunks, foliage, roots, bark,  
We are bedded in the ground, we are rocks,  
We are oaks, we grow in the openings side by side,  
We browse, we are two among the wild herds spontaneous as any,  
We are two fishes swimming in the sea together,  
We are what locust blossoms are, we drop scent around lanes morn-  
ings and evenings,  
We are also the coarse smut of beasts, vegetables, minerals,  
We are two predatory hawks, we soar above and look down,  
We are two resplendent suns, we it is who balance ourselves orbic and  
stellar, we are as two comets,  
We prowl fang'd and four-footed in the woods, we spring on prey,  
We are two clouds forenoons and afternoons driving overhead,  
We are seas mingling, we are two of those cheerful waves rolling over  
each other and interwetting each other,  
We are what the atmosphere is, transparent, receptive, pervious, im-  
pervious,  
We are snow, rain, cold, darkness, we are each product and influence  
of the globe,  
We have circled and circled till we have arrived home again, we two,  
We have voided all but freedom and all but our own joy.

## O HYMEN! O HYMENEE!

O HYMEN! O hymenee! why do you tantalize me thus?  
O why sting me for a swift moment only?  
Why can you not continue? O why do you now cease?  
Is it because if you continued beyond the swift moment you would  
soon certainly kill me?

## I AM HE THAT ACHES WITH LOVE

I AM he that aches with amorous love;  
Does the earth gravitate? does not all matter, aching, attract all mat-  
ter?  
So the body of me to all I meet or know.



## NATIVE MOMENTS

NATIVE moments—when you come upon me—ah you are here now,  
 Give me now libidinous joys only,  
 Give me the drench of my passions, give me life coarse and rank,  
 To-day I go consort with Nature's darlings, to-night too,  
 I am for those who believe in loose delights, I share the midnight orgies  
     of young men,  
 I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers,  
 The echoes ring with our indecent calls, I pick out some low person  
     for my dearest friend,  
 He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one condemned by  
     others for deeds done,  
 I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself from my companions?  
 O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,  
 I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,  
 I will be more to you than to any of the rest.

## ONCE I PASS'D THROUGH A POPULOUS CITY

ONCE I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain for future use with its shows, architecture, customs, traditions,  
 Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman I casually met there  
     who detain'd me for love of me,  
 Day by day and night by night we were together—all else has long  
     been forgotten by me,  
 I remember I say only that woman who passionately clung to me,  
 Again we wander, we love, we separate again,  
 Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,  
 I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and tremulous.

## I HEARD YOU SOLEMN-SWEET PIPES OF THE ORGAN

I HEARD you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ as last Sunday morn I  
pass'd the church,  
Winds of autumn, as I walk'd the woods at dusk I heard your long-  
stretch'd sighs up above so mournful,  
I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera, I heard the so-  
prano in the midst of the quartet singing;  
Heart of my love! you too I heard murmuring low through one of the  
wrists around my head,  
Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little bells last night  
under my ear.

## FACING WEST FROM CALIFORNIA'S SHORES

FACING west from California's shores,  
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,  
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity, the  
land of migrations, look afar,  
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost circled;  
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of Kashmere,  
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the hero,  
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice islands,  
Long having wander'd since, round the earth having wander'd,  
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,  
(But where is what I started for so long ago?  
And why is it yet unfound?)

## AS ADAM EARLY IN THE MORNING

As Adam early in the morning,  
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,  
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,  
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass,  
Be not afraid of my body.



## CALAMUS

### IN PATHS UNTRODDEN

IN paths untrodden,  
In the growth by margins of pond-waters,  
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,  
From all the standards hitherto publish'd, from the pleasures, profits,  
conformities,  
Which too long I was offering to feed my soul,  
Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to me that my soul,  
That the soul of the man I speak for rejoices in comrades,  
Here by myself away from the clank of the world,  
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,  
No longer abash'd, (for in this secluded spot I can respond as I would  
not dare elsewhere,)  
Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself, yet contains all the  
rest,  
Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment,  
Projecting them along that substantial life,  
Bequeathing hence types of athletic love,  
Afternoon this delicious Ninth-month in my forty-first year,  
I proceed for all who are or have been young men,  
To tell the secret of my nights and days,  
To celebrate the need of comrades.

## SCENTED HERBAGE OF MY BREAST

SCENTED herbage of my breast,  
Leaves from you I glean, I write, to be perused best afterwards,  
Tomb-leaves, body-leaves growing up above me above death,  
Perennial roots, tall leaves, O the winter shall not freeze you delicate  
leaves,  
Every year shall you bloom again, out from where you retired you  
shall emerge again;  
O I do not know whether many passing by will discover you or inhale  
your faint odor, but I believe a few will;  
O slender leaves! O blossoms of my blood! I permit you to tell in  
your own way of the heart that is under you,  
O I do not know what you mean there underneath yourselves, you are  
not happiness,  
You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn and sting me,  
Yet you are beautiful to me you faint-tinged roots, you make me think  
of death,  
Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally beautiful except  
death and love?)  
O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of lovers, I  
think it must be for death,  
For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the atmosphere of  
lovers,  
Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines to prefer,  
(I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes death most,)  
Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the same as  
you mean,  
Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see! grow up out of my breast!  
Spring away from the conceal'd heart there!  
Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots timid leaves!  
Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my breast!  
Come I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of mine, I have  
long enough stifled and choked;  
Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you serve me not,  
I will say what I have to say by itself,  
I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never again utter a call  
only their call,  
I will raise with it immortal reverberations through the States,  
I will give an example to lovers to take permanent shape and will  
through the 'States,

Through me shall the words be said to make death exhilarating.  
Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord with it,  
Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now above all, and  
    are folded inseparably together, you love and death are,  
Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I was calling  
    life,  
For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports essential,  
That you hide, in these shifting forms of life, for reasons, and that  
    they are mainly for you,  
That you beyond them come forth to remain, the real reality,  
That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no matter how  
    long,  
That you will one day perhaps take control of all,  
That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of appearance,  
That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not last so very long,  
But you will last very long.



#### WHOEVER YOU ARE HOLDING ME NOW IN HAND

WHOEVER you are holding me now in hand,  
Without one thing all will be useless,  
I give you fair warning before you attempt me further,  
I am not what you supposed, but far different.

Who is he that would become my follower?  
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?

The way is suspicious, the result uncertain, perhaps destructive,  
You would have to give up all else, I alone would expect to be your  
sole and exclusive standard,  
Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,  
The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to the lives  
around you would have to be abandon'd,  
Therefore release me now before troubling yourself any further, let  
go your hand from my shoulders,  
Put me down and depart on your way.

Or else by stealth in some wood for trial,  
Or back of a rock in the open air,  
(For in any roof'd room of a house I emerge not, nor in company,  
And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn, or dead,)  
But just possibly with you on a high hill, first watching lest any person  
for miles around approach unawares,  
Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea or some  
quiet island,  
Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,  
With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss or the new husband's kiss,  
For I am the new husband and I am the comrade.

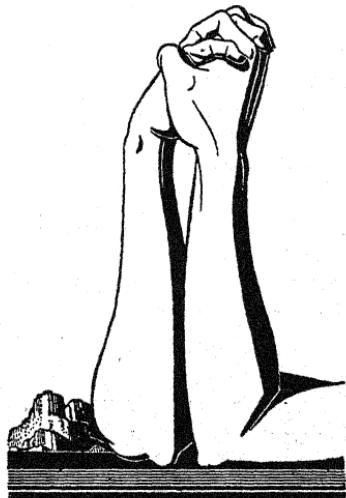
Or if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,  
Where I may feel the throbs of your heart or rest upon your hip,  
Carry me when you go forth over land or sea;  
For thus merely touching you is enough, is best,  
And thus touching you would I silently sleep and be carried eter-  
nally.

But these leaves conning you con at peril,  
For these leaves and me you will not understand,  
They will elude you at first and still more afterward, I will certainly  
elude you,  
Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught me,  
behold!

Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have written this book,  
Nor is it by reading it you will acquire it,  
Nor do those know me best who admire me and vauntingly praise me,

Nor will the candidates for my love (unless at most a very few) prove  
victorious,  
Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as much evil, per-  
haps more,  
For all is useless without that which you may guess at many times and  
not hit, that which I hinted at;  
Therefore release me and depart on your way.



### FOR YOU O DEMOCRACY

COME, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
    With the love of comrades,  
    With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of Amer-  
ica, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prai-  
ries,  
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks.  
    By the love of comrades,  
    By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme!  
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

## THESE I SINGING IN SPRING

THESE I singing in spring collect for lovers,  
(For who but I should understand lovers and all their sorrow and joy?  
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)  
Collecting I traverse the garden the world, but soon I pass the gates,  
Now along the pond-side, now wading in a little, fearing not the wet,  
Now by the post-and-rail fences where the old stones thrown there,  
    pick'd from the fields, have accumulated,  
(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up through the stones and  
    partly cover them, beyond these I pass,)  
Far, far in the forest, or sauntering later in summer, before I think  
    where I go,  
Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and then in the si-  
    lence,  
Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop gathers around me,  
Some walk by my side and some behind, and some embrace my arms  
    or neck,  
They the spirits of dear friends dead or alive, thicker they come, a  
    great crowd, and I in the middle,  
Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I wander with them,  
Plucking something for tokens, tossing toward whoever is near me,  
Here, lilac, with a branch of pine,  
Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pull'd off a live-oak in  
    Florida as it hung trailing down,  
Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,  
And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the pond-side,  
(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and returns again never  
    to separate from me,  
And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades, this  
    calamus-root shall,  
Interchange it youths with each other! let none render it back!)  
And twigs of maple and a bunch of wild orange and chestnut,  
And stems of currants and plum-blows, and the aromatic cedar,  
These I compass'd around by a thick cloud of spirits,  
Wandering, point to or touch as I pass, or throw them loosely from  
    me,  
Indicating to each one what he shall have, giving something to each;  
But what I drew from the water by the pond-side, that I reserve,  
I will give of it, but only to them that love as I myself am capable of  
loving.



### NOT HEAVING FROM MY RIBB'D BREAST ONLY

Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only,  
Not in sighs at night in rage dissatisfied with myself,  
Not in those long-drawn, ill-supprest sighs,  
Not in many an oath and promise broken,  
Not in my wilful and savage soul's volition,  
Not in the subtle nourishment of the air,  
Not in this beating and pounding at my temples and wrists,  
Not in the curious systole and diastole within which will one day  
cease,  
Not in many a hungry wish told to the skies only,  
Not in cries, laughter, defiances, thrown from me when alone far in  
the wilds,  
Not in husky pantings through clinch'd teeth,  
Not in sounded and resounded words, chattering words, echoes, dead  
words,  
Not in the murmurs of my dreams while I sleep,  
Nor the other murmurs of these incredible dreams of every day,  
Nor in the limbs and senses of my body that take you and dismiss you  
continually—not there,  
Not in any or all of them O adhesiveness! O pulse of my life!  
Need I that you exist and show yourself any more than in these songs.

## OF THE TERRIBLE DOUBT OF APPEARANCES

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,  
 Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,  
 That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,  
 That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only,  
 May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men, hills, shining  
     and flowing waters,  
 The skies of day and night, colors, densities, forms, may-be these are  
     (as doubtless they are) only apparitions, and the real something  
     has yet to be known,  
 (How often they dart out of themselves as if to confound me and mock  
     me!  
 How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows, aught of them,)  
 May-be seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they indeed but  
     seem) as from my present point of view, and might prove (as of  
     course they would) nought of what they appear, or nought any-  
     how, from entirely changed points of view;  
 To me these and the like of these are curiously answer'd by my lovers,  
     my dear friends,  
 When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while holding me  
     by the hand,  
 When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and reason  
     hold not, surround us and pervade us,  
 Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I am silent, I  
     require nothing further,  
 I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of identity beyond  
     the grave,  
 But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,  
 He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

## THE BASE OF ALL METAPHYSICS

AND now gentlemen,  
 A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,  
 As base and finale too for all metaphysics.

(So to the students the old professor,  
 At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic systems,

Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and Hegel,  
 Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,  
 And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine having  
 studied long,

I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,  
 See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,  
 Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ the divine  
 I see,  
 The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to  
 friend,  
 Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and parents,  
 Of city for city and land for land.

#### RECORDERS AGES HENCE

RECORDERS ages hence,  
 Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive exterior, I will  
 tell you what to say of me,  
 Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the tenderest  
 lover,  
 The friend the lover's portrait, of whom his friend his lover was fond-  
 est,  
 Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless ocean of love  
 within him, and freely pour'd it forth,  
 Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking of his dear friends, his  
 lovers,  
 Who pensive away from one he lov'd often lay sleepless and dissatis-  
 fied at night,  
 Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one he lov'd might se-  
 cretly be indifferent to him,  
 Whose happiest days were far away through fields, in woods, on hills,  
 he and another wandering hand in hand, they twain apart from  
 other men,  
 Who oft as he saunter'd the streets curv'd with his arm the shoulder of  
 his friend, while the arm of his friend rested upon him also.

#### WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY

WHEN I heard at the close of the day how my name had been receiv'd  
 with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for me  
 that follow'd,

And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplish'd, still  
I was not happy,  
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, re-  
fresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,  
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the  
morning light,  
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing bathed, laugh-  
ing with the cool waters, and saw the sun rise,  
And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his way  
coming, O then I was happy,  
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food nourish'd  
me more, and the beautiful day pass'd well,  
And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at evening came  
my friend,  
And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly con-  
tinually up the shores,  
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed to me  
whispering to congratulate me,  
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in  
the cool night,  
In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was inclined  
toward me,  
And his arm lay lightly around my breast—and that night I was  
happy.

ARE YOU THE NEW PERSON  
DRAWN TOWARD ME?

ARE you the new person drawn toward me?  
To begin with take warning, I am surely far different from what you  
suppose;  
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?  
Do you think it is so easy to have me become your lover?  
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd satisfaction?  
Do you think I am trusty and faithful?  
Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth and tolerant man-  
ner of me?  
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a real  
heroic man?  
Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all maya, illusion?



### ROOTS AND LEAVES THEMSELVES ALONE

Roots and leaves themselves alone are these,  
 Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods and pond-side,  
 Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind around tighter than vines,  
 Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage of trees as the sun is risen,  
 Breezes of land and love set from living shores to you on the living sea, to you O sailors!  
 Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs offer'd fresh to young persons wandering out in the fields when the winter breaks up,  
 Love-buds put before you and within you whoever you are,  
 Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,  
 If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will open and bring form, color, perfume, to you,  
 If you become the aliment and the wet they will become flowers, fruits, tall branches and trees.

### NOT HEAT FLAMES UP AND CONSUMES

Not heat flames up and consumes,  
 Not sea-waves hurry in and out,  
 Not the air delicious and dry, the air of ripe summer, bears lightly along white down-balls of myriads of seeds,  
 Wafted, sailing gracefully, to drop where they may;  
 Not these, O none of these more than the flames of me, consuming, burning for his love whom I love,

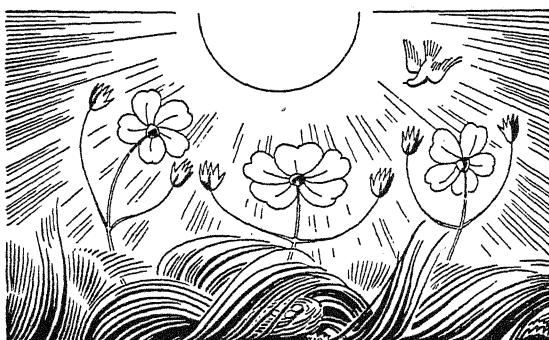
O none more than I hurrying in and out;  
 Does the tide hurry, seeking something and never give up? O I the  
     same,  
 O nor down-balls nor perfumes, nor the high rain-emitting clouds, are  
     borne through the open air,  
 Any more than my soul is borne through the open air,  
 Wafted in all directions O love, for friendship, for you.

## TRICKLE DROPS

TRICKLE drops! my blue veins leaving!  
 O drops of me! trickle, slow drops,  
 Candid from me falling, drip, bleeding drops,  
 From wounds made to free you whence you were prison'd,  
 From my face, from my forehead and lips,  
 From my breast, from within where I was conceal'd, press forth red  
     drops, confession drops,  
 Stain every page, stain every song I sing, every word I say, bloody  
     drops,  
 Let them know your scarlet heat, let them glisten,  
 Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet,  
 Glow upon all I have written or shall write, bleeding drops,  
 Let it all be seen in your light, blushing drops.

## CITY OF ORGIES

CITY of orgies, walks and joys,  
 City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will one day make  
     you illustrious,  
 Not the pageants of you, not your shifting tableaus, your spectacles,  
     repay me,  
 Not the interminable rows of your houses, nor the ships at the  
     wharves,  
 Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows with goods  
     in them,  
 Nor to converse with learn'd persons, or bear my share in the soiree  
     or feast;  
 Not those, but as I pass O Manhattan, your frequent and swift flash  
     of eyes offering me love,  
 Offering response to my own—these repay me,  
 Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.



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of eyes offering me love,  
Offering response to my own—these repay me,  
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.



### BEHOLD THIS SWARTHY FACE

BEHOLD this swarthy face, these gray eyes,  
 This beard, the white wool unclipt upon my neck,  
 My brown hands and the silent manner of me without charm;  
 Yet comes one a Manhattanese and ever at parting kisses me lightly  
     on the lips with robust love,  
 And I on the crossing of the street or on the ship's deck give a kiss in  
     return,  
 We observe that salute of American comrades land and sea,  
 We are those two natural and nonchalant persons.

### I SAW IN LOUISIANA A LIVE-OAK GROWING

I SAW in Louisiana a live-oak growing,  
 All alone stood it and the moss hung down from the branches,  
 Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous leaves of dark  
     green,  
 And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself,  
 But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves standing alone there  
     without its friend near, for I knew I could not,  
 And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it, and  
     twined around it a little moss,  
 And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight in my room,  
 It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,  
 (For I believe lately I think of little else than of them,)  
 Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think of manly love;  
 For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana soli-  
     tary in a wide flat space,  
 Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a lover near,  
 I know very well I could not.

## TO A STRANGER

PASSING stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon you,  
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes to me  
as of a dream,)

I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,  
All is recalled as we flit by each other, fluid, affectionate, chaste, ma-  
tured,

You grew up with me, were a boy with me or a girl with me,  
I ate with you and slept with you, your body has become not yours  
only nor left my body mine only,

You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we pass, you  
take of my beard, breast, hands, in return,

I am not to speak to you, I am to think of you when I sit alone or  
wake at night alone,

I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again,

I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

## THIS MOMENT YEARNING AND THOUGHTFUL

THIS moment yearning and thoughtful sitting alone,  
It seems to me there are other men in other lands yearning and  
thoughtful,

It seems to me I can look over and behold them in Germany, Italy,  
France, Spain,

Or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or Japan, talking other dia-  
lects,

And it seems to me if I could know those men I should become at-  
tached to them as I do to men in my own lands,

O I know we should be brethren and lovers,

I know I should be happy with them.

## I HEAR IT WAS CHARGED AGAINST ME

I HEAR it was charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions,  
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,

(What indeed have I in common with them? or what with the de-  
struction of them?)

Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city of these  
States inland and seaboard,

And in the fields and woods, and above every keel little or large that  
 dents the water,  
 Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,  
 The institution of the dear love of comrades.

### THE PRAIRIE-GRASS DIVIDING

THE prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing,  
 I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,  
 Demand the most copious and close companionship of men,  
 Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,  
 Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious,  
 Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with freedom and com-  
 mand, leading not following,  
 Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those with sweet and lusty flesh  
 clear of taint,  
 Those that look carelessly in the faces of Presidents and governors,  
     as to say *Who are you?*  
 Those of earth-born passion, simple, never constrain'd, never obedient,  
 Those of inland America.

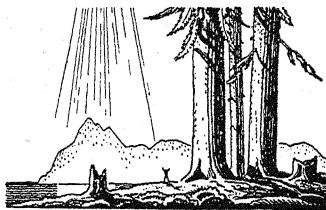
### WHEN I PERUSE THE CONQUER'D FAME

WHEN I peruse the conquer'd fame of heroes and the victories of  
 mighty generals, I do not envy the generals,  
 Nor the President in his Presidency, nor the rich in his great house,  
 But when I hear of the brotherhood of lovers, how it was with them,  
 How together through life, through dangers, odium, unchanging, long  
     and long,  
 Through youth and through middle and old age, how unfaltering, how  
     affectionate and faithful they were,  
 Then I am pensive—I hastily walk away fill'd with the bitterest envy.

### WE TWO BOYS TOGETHER CLINGING

WE two boys together clinging,  
 One the other never leaving,  
 Up and down the roads going, North and South excursions making,  
 Power enjoying, elbows stretching, fingers clutching,  
 Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving,  
 No law less than ourselves owning, sailing, soldiering, thieving,  
     threatening,

Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing, water drinking, on  
the turf or the sea-beach dancing,  
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking, feebleness chasing,  
Fulfilling our foray.



### A PROMISE TO CALIFORNIA

A PROMISE to California,  
Or inland to the great pastoral Plains, and on to Puget sound and  
Oregon;  
Sojourning east a while longer, soon I travel toward you, to remain,  
to teach robust American love,  
For I know very well that I and robust love belong among you, in-  
land, and along the Western sea;  
For these States tend inland and toward the Western sea, and I will  
also.

### HERE THE FRAILEST LEAVES OF ME

HERE the frailest leaves of me and yet my strongest lasting,  
Here I shade and hide my thoughts, I myself do not expose them,  
And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

### NO LABOR-SAVING MACHINE

No labor-saving machine,  
Nor discovery have I made,  
Nor will I be able to leave behind me any wealthy bequest to found  
a hospital or library,  
Nor reminiscence of any deed of courage for America,  
Nor literary success nor intellect, nor book for the book-shelf,  
But a few carols vibrating through the air I leave,  
For comrades and lovers.

## A GLIMPSE

A GLIMPSE through an interstice caught,  
Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room around the stove  
late of a winter night, and I unremark'd seated in a corner,  
Of a youth who loves me and whom I love, silently approaching and  
seating himself near, that he may hold me by the hand,  
A long while amid the noises of coming and going, of drinking and  
oath and smutty jest,  
There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking little, per-  
haps not a word.

## A LEAF FOR HAND IN HAND

A LEAF for hand in hand;  
You natural persons old and young!  
You on the Mississippi and on all the branches and bayous of the  
Mississippi!  
You friendly boatmen and mechanics! you roughs!  
You twain! and all processions moving along the streets!  
I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it common for you to  
walk hand in hand.

## EARTH, MY LIKENESS

EARTH, my likeness,  
Though you look so impassive, ample and spheric there,  
I now suspect that is not all;  
I now suspect there is something fierce in you eligible to burst forth,  
For an athlete is enamour'd of me, and I of him,  
But toward him there is something fierce and terrible in me eligible  
to burst forth,  
I dare not tell it in words, not even in these songs.

## I DREAM'D IN A DREAM

I DREAM'D in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the  
whole of the rest of the earth,  
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,  
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it led the  
rest,  
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,  
And in all their looks and words.

## WHAT THINK YOU I TAKE MY PEN IN HAND?

WHAT think you I take my pen in hand to record?  
 The battle-ship, perfect-model'd, majestic, that I saw pass the offing  
     to-day under full sail?  
 The splendors of the past day? or the splendor of the night that  
     envelops me?  
 Or the vaunted glory and growth of the great city spread around me?  
     —no;  
 But merely of two simple men I saw to-day on the pier in the midst  
     of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends,  
 The one to remain hung on the other's neck and passionately kiss'd  
     him,  
 While the one to depart tightly prest the one to remain in his arms.

## TO THE EAST AND TO THE WEST

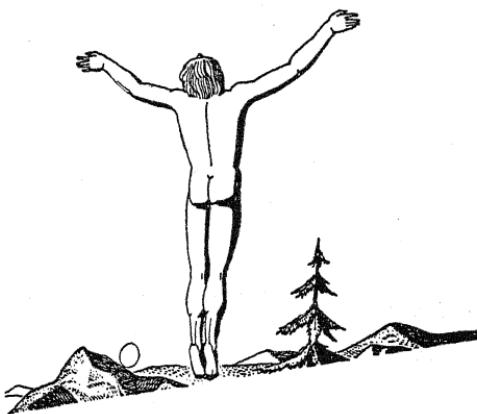
To the East and to the West,  
 To the man of the Seaside State and of Pennsylvania,  
 To the Kanadian of the north, to the Southerner I love,  
 These with perfect trust to depict you as myself, the germs are in all  
     men,  
 I believe the main purport of these States is to found a superb friend-  
     ship, exaltè, previously unknown,  
 Because I perceive it waits, and has been always waiting, latent in all  
     men.

## SOMETIMES WITH ONE I LOVE

SOMETIMES with one I love I fill myself with rage for fear I effuse un-  
     return'd love,  
 But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is certain one  
     way or another,  
 (I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not return'd,  
 Yet out of that I have written these songs.)

## TO A WESTERN BOY

MANY things to absorb I teach to help you become eleve of mine;  
 Yet if blood like mine circle not in your veins,  
 If you be not silently selected by lovers and do not silently select  
     lovers,  
 Of what use is it that you seek to become eleve of mine?



### FAST-ANCHOR'D ETERNAL O LOVE!

FAST-ANCHOR'D eternal O love! O woman I love!  
 O bride! O wife! more resistless than I can tell, the thought of you!  
 Then separate, as disembodied or another born,  
 Ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation,  
 I ascend, I float in the regions of your love O man,  
 O sharer of my roving life.

### AMONG THE MULTITUDE

AMONG the men and women the multitude,  
 I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,  
 Acknowledging none else, not parent, wife, husband, brother, child,  
 any nearer than I am,  
 Some are baffled, but that one is not—that one knows me.

Ah lover and perfect equal,  
 I meant that you should discover me so by faint indirections,  
 And I when I meet you mean to discover you by the like in you.

### O YOU WHOM I OFTEN AND SILENTLY COME

O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I may be  
 with you,  
 As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the same room with  
 you,  
 Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is playing  
 within me.

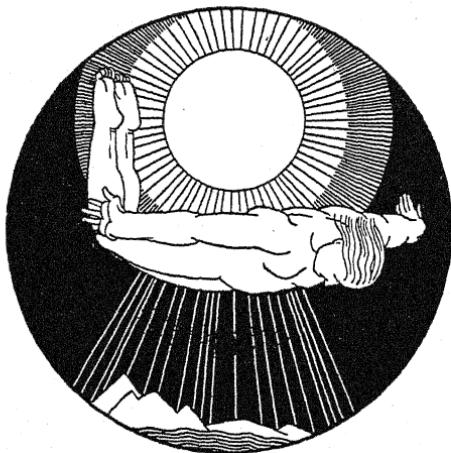
## THAT SHADOW MY LIKENESS

THAT shadow my likeness that goes to and fro seeking a livelihood,  
chattering, chaffering,  
How often I find myself standing and looking at it where it flits,  
How often I question and doubt whether that is really me;  
But among my lovers and caroling these songs,  
O I never doubt whether that is really me.

## FULL OF LIFE NOW

FULL of life now, compact, visible,  
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,  
To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,  
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.

When you read these I that was visible am become invisible,  
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking me,  
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and become  
your comrade;  
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with  
you.)



## SALUT AU MONDE!

### 1

O TAKE my hand Walt Whitman!  
Such gliding wonders! such sights and sounds!  
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next,  
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.

What widens within you Walt Whitman?  
What waves and soils exuding?  
What climes? what persons and cities are here?  
Who are the infants, some playing, some slumbering?  
Who are the girls? who are the married women?  
Who are the groups of old men going slowly with their arms about  
each other's necks?  
What rivers are these? what forests and fruits are these?  
What are the mountains call'd that rise so high in the mists?  
What myriads of dwellings are they fill'd with dwellers?

## 2

Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens,  
Asia, Africa, Europe, are to the east—America is provided for in the  
west,  
Banding the bulge of the earth winds the hot equator,  
Curiously north and south turn the axis-ends,  
Within me is the longest day, the sun wheels in slanting rings, it does  
not set for months,  
Stretch'd in due time within me the midnight sun just rises above the  
horizon and sinks again,  
Within me zones, seas, cataracts, forests, volcanoes, groups,  
Malaysia, Polynesia, and the great West Indian islands.

## 3

What do you hear Walt Whitman?  
I hear the workman singing and the farmer's wife singing,  
I hear in the distance the sounds of children and of animals early in  
the day,  
I hear emulous shouts of Australians pursuing the wild horse,  
I hear the Spanish dance with castanets in the chestnut shade, to the  
rebeck and guitar,  
I hear continual echoes from the Thames,  
I hear fierce French liberty songs,  
I hear of the Italian boat-sculler the musical recitative of old poems,  
I hear the locusts in Syria as they strike the grain and grass with the  
showers of their terrible clouds,  
I hear the Coptic refrain toward sundown, pensively falling on the  
breast of the black venerable vast mother the Nile,  
I hear the chirp of the Mexican muleteer, and the bells of the mule,  
I hear the Arab muezzin calling from the top of the mosque,  
I hear the Christian priests at the altars of their churches, I hear the  
responsive base and soprano,  
I hear the cry of the Cossack, and the sailor's voice putting to sea at  
Okotsk,  
I hear the wheeze of the slave-coffle as the slaves march on, as the  
husky gangs pass on by twos and threes, fasten'd together with  
wrist-chains and ankle-chains,  
I hear the Hebrew reading his records and psalms,  
I hear the rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the strong legends of  
the Romans,

I hear the tale of the divine life and bloody death of the beautiful God  
the Christ,  
I hear the Hindoo teaching his favorite pupil the loves, wars, adages,  
transmitted safely to this day from poets who wrote three thousand  
years ago.

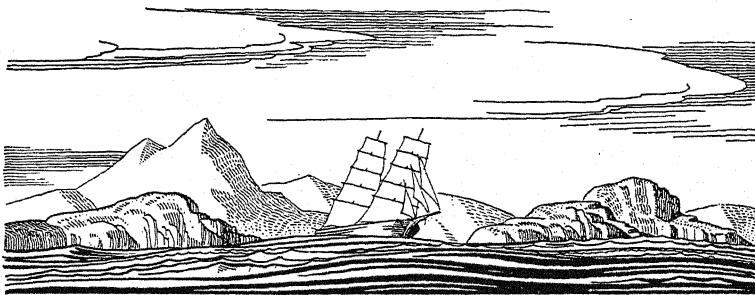
## 4

What do you see Walt Whitman?  
Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute you?

I see a great round wonder rolling through space,  
I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, graveyards, jails, factories,  
palaces, hovels, huts of barbarians, tents of nomads upon the  
surface,  
I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers are sleeping,  
and the sunlit part on the other side,  
I see the curious rapid change of the light and shade,  
I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of them as my  
land is to me.

I see plenteous waters,  
I see mountain peaks, I see the sierras of Andes where they range,  
I see plainly the Himalayas, Chian Shahs, Altays, Ghauts,  
I see the giant pinnacles of Elbruz, Kazbek, Bazardjusi,  
I see the Styrian Alps, and the Karnac Alps,  
I see the Pyrenees, Balks, Carpathians, and to the north the Dofra-  
fields, and off at sea mount Hecla,  
I see Vesuvius and Etna, the mountains of the Moon, and the Red  
mountains of Madagascar,  
I see the Lybian, Arabian, and Asiatic deserts,  
I see huge dreadful Arctic and Antarctic icebergs,  
I see the superior oceans and the interior ones, the Atlantic and Pacific,  
the sea of Mexico, the Brazilian sea, and the sea of Peru,  
The waters of Hindustan, the China sea, and the gulf of Guinea,  
The Japan waters, the beautiful bay of Nagasaki land-lock'd in its  
mountains,  
The spread of the Baltic, Caspian, Bothnia, the British shores, and  
the bay of Biscay,  
The clear-sunn'd Mediterranean, and from one to another of its islands,  
The White sea, and the sea around Greenland.

I behold the mariners of the world,  
 Some are in storms, some in the night with the watch on the lookout,  
 Some drifting helplessly, some with contagious diseases.



I behold the sail and steamships of the world, some in clusters in port,  
 some on their voyages,  
 Some double the cape of Storms, some cape Verde, others capes  
 Guardafui, Bon, or Bajadore,  
 Others Dondra head, others pass the straits of Sunda, others cape  
 Lopatka, others Behring's straits,  
 Others cape Horn, others sail the gulf of Mexico or along Cuba or  
 Hayti, others Hudson's bay or Baffin's bay,  
 Others pass the straits of Dover, others enter the Wash, others the  
 firth of Solway, others round cape Clear, others the Land's End,  
 Others traverse the Zuyder Zee or the Scheld,  
 Others as comers and goers at Gibraltar or the Dardanelles,  
 Others sternly push their way through the northern winter-packs,  
 Others descend or ascend the Obi or the Lena,  
 Others the Niger or the Congo, others the Indus, the Burampooter  
 and Cambodia,  
 Others wait steam'd up ready to start in the ports of Australia,  
 Wait at Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Marseilles, Lisbon, Naples,  
 Hamburg, Bremen, Bordeaux, the Hague, Copenhagen,  
 Wait at Valparaiso, Rio Janeiro, Panama.

I see the tracks of the railroads of the earth,  
 I see them in Great Britain, I see them in Europe,  
 I see them in Asia and in Africa.

I see the electric telegraphs of the earth,  
I see the filaments of the news of the wars, deaths, losses, gains, passions, of my race.

I see the long river-stripes of the earth,  
I see the Amazon and the Paraguay,  
I see the four great rivers of China, the Amour, the Yellow River, the Yang-tse, and the Pearl,  
I see where the Seine flows, and where the Danube, the Loire, the Rhone, and the Guadalquivir flow,  
I see the windings of the Volga, the Dnieper, the Oder,  
I see the Tuscan going down the Arno, and the Venetian along the Po,  
I see the Greek seaman sailing out of Egina bay.

## 6

I see the site of the old empire of Assyria, and that of Persia, and that of India,  
I see the falling of the Ganges over the high rim of Saukara.

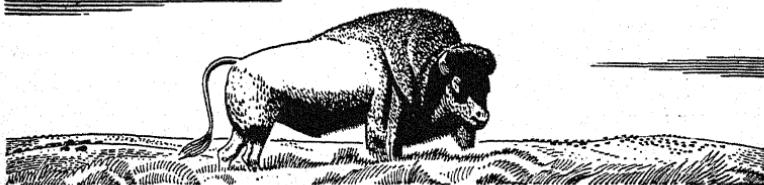
I see the place of the idea of the Deity incarnated by avatars in human forms,  
I see the spots of the successions of priests on the earth, oracles, sacrificers, brahmins, sabians, llamas, monks, muftis, exhorters,  
I see where druids walk'd the groves of Mona, I see the mistletoe and vervain,  
I see the temples of the deaths of the bodies of Gods, I see the old signifiers.

I see Christ eating the bread of his last supper in the midst of youths and old persons,  
I see where the strong divine young man the Hercules toil'd faithfully and long and then died,  
I see the place of the innocent rich life and hapless fate of the beautiful nocturnal son, the full-limb'd Bacchus,  
I see Kneph, blooming, drest in blue, with the crown of feathers on his head,  
I see Hermes, unsuspected, dying, well-belov'd, saying to the people  
*Do not weep for me.*  
*This is not my true country, I have lived banish'd from my true country, I now go back there,*  
*I return to the celestial sphere where every one goes in his turn.*

I see the battle-fields of the earth, grass grows upon them and blossoms and corn,  
I see the tracks of ancient and modern expeditions.

I see the nameless masonries, venerable messages of the unknown events, heroes, records of the earth.

I see the places of the sagas,  
I see pine-trees and fir-trees torn by northern blasts,  
I see granite bowlders and cliffs, I see green meadows and lakes,  
I see the burial-cairns of Scandinavian warriors,  
I see them raised high with stones by the marge of restless oceans,  
that the dead men's spirits when they wearied of their quiet graves  
might rise up through the mounds and gaze on the tossing billows,  
and be refresh'd by storms, immensity, liberty, action.



I see the steppes of Asia,  
I see the tumuli of Mongolia, I see the tents of Kalmucks and Baskirs,  
I see the nomadic tribes with herds of oxen and cows,  
I see the table-lands notch'd with ravines, I see the jungles and deserts,  
I see the camel, the wild steed, the bustard, the fat-tail'd sheep, the antelope, and the burrowing wolf.

I see the highlands of Abyssinia,  
I see flocks of goats feeding, and see the fig-tree, tamarind, date,  
And see fields of teff-wheat and places of verdure and gold.

I see the Brazilian vaquero,  
I see the Bolivian ascending mount Sorata,  
I see the Wacho crossing the plains, I see the incomparable rider of horses with his lasso on his arm,  
I see over the pampas the pursuit of wild cattle for their hides.

## 8, [9]

I see the regions of snow and ice,  
I see the sharp-eyed Samoiede and the Finn,  
I see the seal-seeker in his boat poising his lance,  
I see the Siberian on his slight-built sledge drawn by dogs,  
I see the porpoise-hunters, I see the whale-crews of the south Pacific  
and the north Atlantic,  
I see the cliffs, glaciers, torrents, valleys, of Switzerland—I mark the  
long winters and the isolation.

## 9

I see the cities of the earth and make myself at random a part of them,  
I am a real Parisian,  
I am a habitan of Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Constantinople,  
I am of Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne,  
I am of London, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh, Limerick,  
I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyons, Brussels, Berne,  
Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Florence,  
I belong in Moscow, Cracow, Warsaw, or northward in Christiania  
or Stockholm, or in Siberian Irkutsk, or in some street in Iceland,  
I descend upon all those cities, and rise from them again.

## 10

I see vapors exhaling from unexplored countries,  
I see the savage types, the bow and arrow, the poison'd splint, the  
fetich, and the obi.  
  
I see African and Asiatic towns,  
I see Algiers, Tripoli, Derne, Mogadore, Timbuctoo, Monrovia,  
I see the swarms of Pekin, Canton, Benares, Delhi, Calcutta, Tokio,  
I see the Krumman in his hut, and the Dahoman and Ashanteeman in  
their huts,  
I see the Turk smoking opium in Aleppo,  
I see the picturesque crowds at the fairs of Khiva and those of Herat,  
I see Teheran, I see Muscat and Medina and the intervening sands, I  
see the caravans toiling onward,  
I see Egypt and the Egyptians, I see the pyramids and obelisks,  
I look on chisell'd histories, records of conquering kings, dynasties,  
cut in slabs of sand-stone, or on granite-blocks,

I see at Memphis mummy-pits containing mummies embalm'd,  
 swathed in linen cloth, lying there many centuries,  
 I look on the fall'n Theban, the large-ball'd eyes, the side-drooping  
 neck, the hands folded across the breast.

I see all the menials of the earth, laboring,  
 I see all the prisoners in the prisons,  
 I see the defective human bodies of the earth,  
 The blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks, lunatics,  
 The pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-makers of the earth,  
 The helpless infants, and the helpless old men and women.

I see male and female everywhere,  
 I see the serene brotherhood of philosophs,  
 I see the constructiveness of my race,  
 I see the results of the perseverance and industry of my race,  
 I see ranks, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, I go among them, I mix  
 indiscriminately,  
 And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.

## 11

You whoever you are!  
 You daughter or son of England!  
 You of the mighty Slavic tribes and empires! you Russ in Russia!  
 You dim-descended, black, divine-soul'd African, large, fine-headed,  
 nobly-form'd, superbly destin'd, on equal terms with me!  
 You Norwegian! Swede! Dane! Icelander! you Prussian!  
 You Spaniard of Spain! you Portuguese!  
 You Frenchwoman and Frenchman of France!  
 You Belge! you liberty-lover of the Netherlands! (you stock whence  
 I myself have descended;)  
 You sturdy Austrian! you Lombard! Hun! Bohemian! farmer of  
 Styria!  
 You neighbor of the Danube!  
 You working-man of the Rhine, the Elbe, or the Weser! you working-  
 woman too!  
 You Sardinian! you Bavarian! Swabian! Saxon! Wallachian! Bul-  
 garian!  
 You Roman! Neapolitan! you Greek!  
 You lithe matador in the arena at Seville!

You mountaineer living lawlessly on the Taurus or Caucasus!  
 You Bokh horse-herd watching your mares and stallions feeding!  
 You beautiful-bodied Persian at full speed in the saddle shooting  
     arrows to the mark!  
 You Chinaman and Chinawoman of China! you Tartar of Tartary!  
 You women of the earth subordinated at your tasks!  
 You Jew journeying in your old age through every risk to stand once  
     on Syrian ground!  
 You other Jews waiting in all lands for your Messiah!  
 You thoughtful Armenian pondering by some stream of the Eu-  
     phrates! you peering amid the ruins of Nineveh! you ascending  
     mount Ararat!  
 You foot-worn pilgrim welcoming the far-away sparkle of the minarets  
     of Mecca!  
 You sheiks along the stretch from Suez to Bab-el-mandeb ruling your  
     families and tribes!  
 You olive-grower tending your fruit on fields of Nazareth, Damascus,  
     or lake Tiberias!  
 You Thibet trader on the wide inland or bargaining in the shops of  
     Lassa!  
 You Japanese man or woman! you liver in Madagascar, Ceylon,  
     Sumatra, Borneo!  
 All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, indifferent  
     of place!  
 All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes of the sea!  
 And you of centuries hence when you listen to me!  
 And you each and everywhere whom I specify not, but include just  
     the same!  
 Health to you! good will to you all, from me and America sent!

Each of us inevitable,  
 Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right upon the earth,  
 Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,  
 Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

You Hottentot with clicking palate! you woolly-hair'd hordes!  
 You own'd persons dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops!  
 You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive countenances  
     of brutes!

You poor koboo whom the meanest of the rest look down upon for  
     all your glimmering language and spirituality!  
 You dwarf'd Kamtschatkan, Greenlander, Lapp!  
 You Austral negro, naked, red, sooty, with protrusive lip, groveling,  
     seeking your food!  
 You Caffre, Berber, Soudanese!  
 You haggard, uncouth, untutor'd Bedowee!  
 You plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul, Cairo!  
 You benighted roamer of Amazonia! you Patagonian! you Feejee-  
     man!  
 I do not prefer others so very much before you either,  
 I do not say one word against you, away back there where you stand,  
 (You will come forward in due time to my side.)

## 13

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination around the  
     whole earth,  
 I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them ready for me in  
     all lands,  
 I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them.

You vapors, I think I have risen with you, moved away to distant  
     continents, and fallen down there, for reasons,  
 I think I have blown with you you winds;  
 You waters I have finger'd every shore with you,  
 I have run through what any river or strait of the globe has run  
     through,  
 I have taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas and on the high em-  
     bedded rocks, to cry thence:

*Salut au monde!*  
 What cities the light or warmth penetrates I penetrate those cities  
     myself,  
 All islands to which birds wing their way I wing my way myself.

Toward you all, in America's name,  
 I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the signal,  
 To remain after me in sight forever,  
 For all the haunts and homes of men.



## SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

### 1

AFOOT and light-hearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,  
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,  
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,  
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,  
I do not want the constellations any nearer,  
I know they are very well where they are,  
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,  
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go,  
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,  
I am fill'd with them; and I will fill them in return.)

## 2

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are not all that  
is here,  
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference nor denial,  
The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the illiterate  
person, are not denied;  
The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's tramp, the  
drunkard's stagger, the laughing party of mechanics,  
The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the eloping  
couple,  
The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture into the  
town, the return back from the town,  
They pass, I also pass, any thing passes, none can be interdicted,  
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

## 3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!  
You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give them  
shape!  
You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable showers!  
You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!  
I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the edges!  
You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-lined sides!  
you distant ships!  
You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd façades! you roofs!  
You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!  
You windows whose transparent shells might expose so much!  
You doors and ascending steps! you arches!  
You gray stones of interminable pavements! you trodden crossings!  
From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted to your-  
selves, and now would impart the same secretly to me,  
From the living and the dead you have peopled your impassive sur-  
faces, and the spirits thereof would be evident and amicable with  
me.

## 4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,  
The picture alive, every part in its best light,  
The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping where it is not  
wanted,  
The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay fresh sentiment of the  
road.

O highway I travel, do you say to me *Do not leave me?*  
Do you say *Venture not—if you leave me you are lost?*  
Do you say *I am already prepared, I am well-beaten and undenied,*  
*adhere to me?*  
O public road, I say back I am not afraid to leave you, yet I love you,  
You express me better than I can express myself,  
You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air, and all free  
poems also,  
I think I could stop here myself and do miracles,  
I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and whoever  
beholds me shall like me,  
I think whoever I see must be happy.

## 5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,  
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,  
Listening to others, considering well what they say,  
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,  
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that  
would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space,  
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,  
I did not know I held so much goodness.

All seems beautiful to me,  
I can repeat over to men and women You have done such good to me  
I would do the same to you,

I will recruit for myself and you as I go,  
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,  
I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,  
Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,  
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall bless me.

## 6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear it would not amaze me,  
Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd it would not  
astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,  
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.

Here a great personal deed has room,  
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race of men,  
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and mocks all au-  
thority and all argument against it.)

Here is the test of wisdom,  
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,  
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not having it,  
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof,  
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is content,  
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and the ex-  
cellence of things;  
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that provokes  
it out of the soul.

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,  
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove at all under the  
spacious clouds and along the landscape and flowing currents.

Here is realization,  
Here is a man tallied—he realizes here what he has in him,  
The past, the future, majesty, love—if they are vacant of you, you are  
vacant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;  
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me?  
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for you and me?

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it is apropos;  
 Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by strangers?  
 Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?



## 7

Here is the efflux of the soul,  
 The efflux of the soul comes from within through embower'd gates,  
     ever provoking questions,  
 These yearnings why are they? these thoughts in the darkness why  
     are they?  
 Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me the sun-  
     light expands my blood?  
 Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink flat and lank?  
 Why are there trees I never walk under but large and melodious  
     thoughts descend upon me?  
 (I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees and al-  
     ways drop fruit as I pass;)  
 What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?  
 What with some driver as I ride on the seat by his side?  
 What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the shore as I walk  
     by and pause?  
 What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's good-will? what  
     gives them to be free to mine?

## 8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,  
I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,  
Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,  
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and sweetness of  
man and woman,  
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter every day  
out of the roots of themselves, than it sprouts fresh and sweet  
continually out of itself.)  
Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat of the love  
of young and old,  
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and attainments,  
Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of contact.

## 9

Allons! whoever you are come travel with me!  
Traveling with me you find what never tires.

The earth never tires,  
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, Nature is rude  
and incomprehensible at first,  
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well envelop'd,  
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than words can  
tell.

Allons! we must not stop here,  
However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient this dwelling  
we cannot remain here,  
However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters we must  
not anchor here,  
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are permitted  
to receive it but a little while.

## 10

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,  
We will sail pathless and wild seas,

We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,  
Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity;  
Allons! from all formules!  
From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests.

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the burial waits no longer.

Allons! yet take warning!  
He traveling with me needs the best blood, thews, endurance,  
None may come to the trial till he or she bring courage and health,  
Come not here if you have already spent the best of yourself,  
Only those may come who come in sweet and determin'd bodies,  
No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or venereal taint is permitted here.

(I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes,  
We convince by our presence.)

## 11

Listen! I will be honest with you,  
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new prizes,  
These are the days that must happen to you:  
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,  
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve,  
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, you hardly  
settle yourself to satisfaction before you are call'd by an irresistible  
call to depart,  
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings of those who  
remain behind you,  
What beckonings of love you receive you shall only answer with  
passionate kisses of parting,  
You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their reach'd hands  
toward you.

## 12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!  
They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic men—they  
are the greatest women,

Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,  
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,  
Habituès of many distant countries, habituès of far-distant dwellings,  
Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary toilers,  
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the shore,  
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender helpers of children,  
dren, bearers of children,  
Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-down of coffins,  
Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years, the curious years  
each emerging from that which preceded it,  
Journeyers as with companions, namely their own diverse phases,  
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days,  
Journeyers gayly with their own youth, journeyers with their bearded  
and well-grain'd manhood,  
Journeyers with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd, content,  
Journeyers with their own sublime old age of manhood or woman-  
hood,  
Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of the  
universe,  
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of death.

## 13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,  
To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,  
To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights they  
tend to,  
Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,  
To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass it,  
To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may reach it  
and pass it,  
To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for you, how-  
ever long but it stretches and waits for you,  
To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,  
To see no possession but you may possess it, enjoying all without  
labor or purchase, abstracting the feast yet not abstracting one  
particle of it,  
To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich man's elegant villa,  
and the chaste blessings of the well-married couple, and the fruits  
of orchards and flowers of gardens,

To take to your use out of the compact cities as you pass through,  
To carry buildings and streets with you afterward wherever you go,  
To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you encounter  
them, to gather the love out of their hearts,  
To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that you leave them  
behind you,  
To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as roads for  
traveling souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls,  
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that was or is  
apparent upon this globe or any globe, falls into niches and  
corners before the procession of souls along the grand roads of  
the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along the grand roads  
of the universe, all other progress is the needed emblem and sus-  
tenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,  
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbulent, feeble, dis-  
satisfied,  
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected by men,  
They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where they go,  
But I know that they go toward the best—toward something great.

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or woman come forth!  
You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house, though  
you built it, or though it has been built for you.

Out of the dark confinement! out from behind the screen!  
It is useless to protest, I know all and expose it.  
Behold through you as bad as the rest,

Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of people,\*  
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd and trimm'd  
faces,  
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to hear the confession,  
Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulking and hiding it goes,  
Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities, polite and  
bland in the parlors,



In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in the public assembly,  
Home to the houses of men and women, at the table, in the bedroom,  
everywhere,  
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death under the  
breast-bones, hell under the skull-bones,  
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and artificial  
flowers,  
Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable of itself,  
Speaking of any thing else but never of itself.

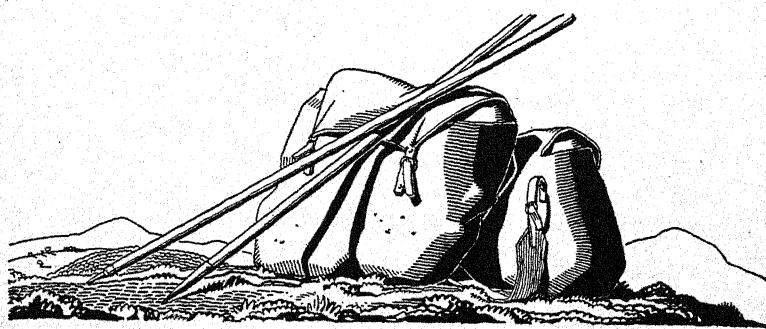
Have the past struggles succeeded?  
 What has succeeded? yourself? your nation? Nature?  
 Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of things that  
 from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth  
 something to make a greater struggle necessary.

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,  
 He going with me must go well arm'd,  
 He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry enemies,  
 desertions.

## 15

Allons! the road is before us!  
 It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—be not  
 detain'd!  
 Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on the  
 shelf unopen'd!  
 Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain unearn'd!  
 Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!  
 Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead in the  
 court, and the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand!  
 I give you my love more precious than money,  
 I give you myself before preaching or law;  
 Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?  
 Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?





## CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

### 1

FLOOD-TIDE below me! I see you face to face!  
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also face  
to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious  
you are to me!

On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning  
home, are more curious to me than you suppose,  
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more  
to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

### 2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of the  
day,

The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated, every  
one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,

The similitudes of the past and those of the future,

The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings, on  
the walk in the street and the passage over the river,

The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away,

The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,

The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore,  
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,  
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the  
heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,  
Others will see the islands large and small;  
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an  
hour high,  
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others  
will see them,  
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-  
back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

## 3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not,  
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many  
generations hence,  
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,  
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,  
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright  
flow, I was refresh'd,  
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift cur-  
rent, I stood yet was hurried,  
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-  
stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,  
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air float-  
ing with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,  
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and left the  
rest in strong shadow,  
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward the south,  
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,  
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,  
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of my  
head in the sunlit water,  
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-westward,  
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,  
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,  
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,  
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at anchor,

The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,  
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender ser-  
pentine pennants,  
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-  
houses,  
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of the  
wheels,  
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,  
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the frolic-  
some crests and glistening,  
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of the  
granite storehouses by the docks,  
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flank'd on  
each side by the barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,  
On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys burn-  
ing high and glaringly into the night,  
Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and yellow light  
over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts of streets.

## 4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,  
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river,  
The men and women I saw were all near to me,  
Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd for-  
ward to them,  
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

## 5

What is it then between us?  
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not,  
I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,  
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the waters  
around it,  
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me.  
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon me,  
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came upon  
me,

I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,  
 I too had receiv'd identity by my body,  
 That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I  
 should be of my body.

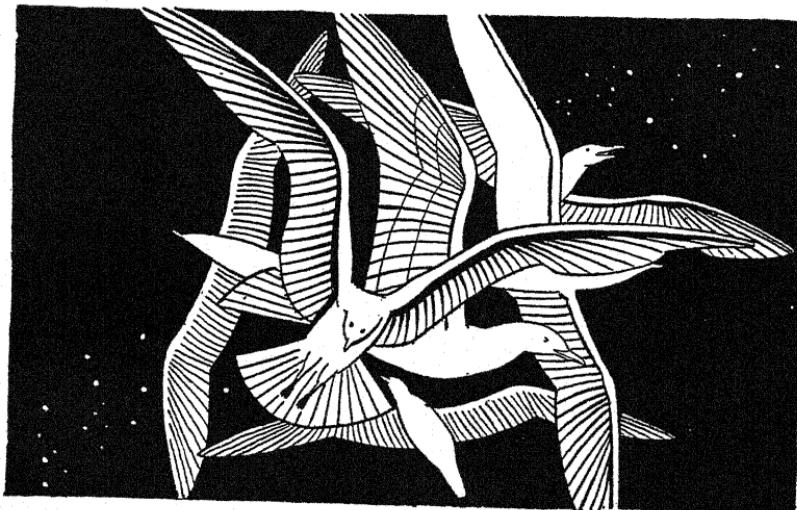
## 6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,  
 The dark threw its patches down upon me also,  
 The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,  
 My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality mea-  
 gre?  
 Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,  
 I am he who knew what it was to be evil,  
 I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,  
 Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,  
 Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,  
 Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,  
 The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,  
 The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not want-  
 ing,  
 Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these want-  
 ing,  
 Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,  
 Was call'd by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young men  
     as they saw me approaching or passing,  
 Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of  
     their flesh against me as I sat,  
 Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly, yet  
     never told them a word,  
 Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing,  
     sleeping,  
 Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,  
 The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great as we  
     like,  
 Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

## 7

Closer yet I approach you,  
 What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I laid in  
     my stores in advance,  
 I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?  
 Who knows but I am enjoying this?  
 Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at you  
 now, for all you cannot see me?



## 8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than mast-hemm'd Manhattan?

River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?

The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight,  
 and the belated lighter?

What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as I approach?

What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man  
 that looks in my face?

Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?

We understand then do we not?

What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not accepted?

What the study could not teach—what the preaching could not accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not?

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!  
Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!  
Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me, or the  
men and women generations after me!  
Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!  
Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful hills of  
Brooklyn!  
Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers!  
Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!  
Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or public as-  
sembly!  
Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by my  
nighest name!  
Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress!  
Play the old role, the role that is great or small according as one  
makes it!  
Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways  
be looking upon you;  
Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste  
with the hastening current;  
Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the  
air;  
Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till all down-  
cast eyes have time to take it from you!  
Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any one's  
head, in the sunlit water!  
Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-sail'd  
schooners, sloops, lighters!  
Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!  
Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at night-  
fall! cast red and yellow light over the tops of the houses!  
Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,  
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,  
About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our divinest  
aromas,  
Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and  
sufficient rivers,  
Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,  
Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers,  
We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward,  
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves  
from us,  
We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you permanently  
within us,  
We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you also,  
You furnish your parts toward eternity,  
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.



## SONG OF THE ANSWERER

### 1

Now list to my morning's romanza, I tell the signs of the Answerer,  
To the cities and farms I sing as they spread in the sunshine before  
me.

A young man comes to me bearing a message from his brother,  
How shall the young man know the whether and when of his brother?  
Tell him to send me the signs.

And I stand before the young man face to face, and take his right  
hand in my left hand and his left hand in my right hand,  
And I answer for his brother and for men, and I answer for him that  
answers for all, and send these signs.

Him all wait for, him all yield up to, his word is decisive and final,  
Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves as amid light,  
Him they immerse and he immerses them.

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the landscape, people,  
animals,

The profound earth and its attributes and the unquiet ocean, (so tell  
I my morning's romanza,)

All enjoyments and properties and money, and whatever money will  
buy,

The best farms, others toiling and planting and he unavoidably reaps,  
The noblest and costliest cities, others grading and building and he  
domiciles there,

Nothing for any one but what is for him, near and far are for him,  
the ships in the offing,  
The perpetual shows and marches on land are for him if they are for  
anybody.

He puts things in their attitudes,  
He puts to-day out of himself with plasticity and love,  
He places his own times, reminiscences, parents, brothers and sisters,  
associations, employment, politics, so that the rest never shame  
them afterward, nor assume to command them.

He is the Answerer,  
What can be answer'd he answers, and what cannot be answer'd he  
shows how it cannot be answer'd.

A man is a summons and challenge,  
(It is vain to skulk—do you hear that mocking and laughter? do you  
hear the ironical echoes?)

Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action, pleasure, pride, beat  
up and down seeking to give satisfaction,  
He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat up and  
down also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he may go freshly  
and gently and safely by day or by night,  
He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of the prying of  
hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more welcome or  
universal than he is,  
The person he favors by day or sleeps with at night is blessed.

Every existence has its idiom, every thing has an idiom and tongue,  
He resolves all tongues into his own and bestows it upon men, and  
any man translates, and any man translates himself also,  
One part does not counteract another part, he is the joiner, he sees  
how they join.

He says indifferently and alike *How are you friend?* to the President  
at his levee,

And he says *Good-day my brother*, to Cudge that hoes in the sugar-field,  
And both understand him and know that his speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the capitol,  
He walks among the Congress, and one Representative says to another,  
*Here is our equal appearing and new.*

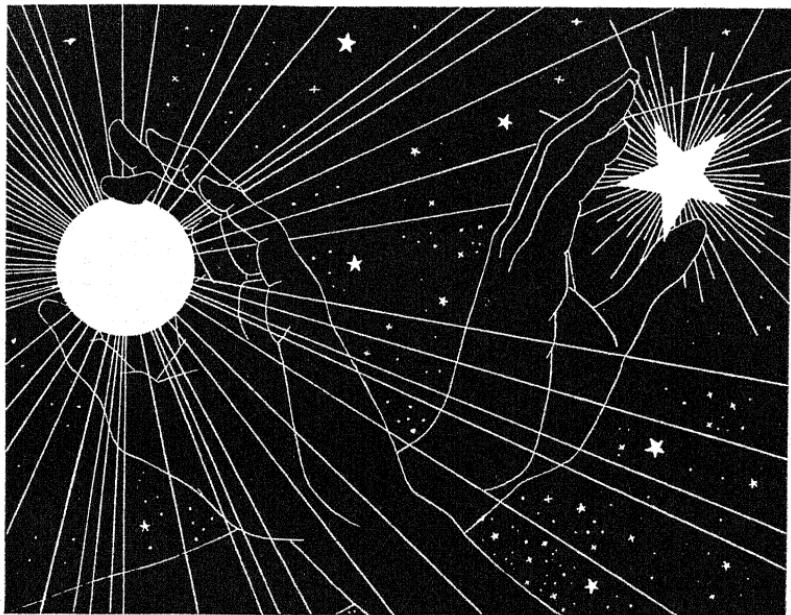
Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,  
And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier, and the sailors that he  
has follow'd the sea,  
And the authors take him for an author, and the artists for an artist,  
And the laborers perceive he could labor with them and love them,  
No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow it or has fol-  
low'd it,  
No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers and sisters  
there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,  
A Jew to the Jew he seems, a Russ to the Russ, usual and near, re-  
moved from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveler's coffee-house claims him,  
The Italian or Frenchman is sure, the German is sure, the Spaniard is  
sure, and the island Cuban is sure,  
The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on the Mississippi  
or St. Lawrence or Sacramento, or Hudson or Paumanok sound,  
claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect blood,  
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar, see them-  
selves in the ways of him, he strangely transmutes them,  
They are not vile any more, they hardly know themselves they are so  
grown.

The indications and tally of time,  
Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophs,  
Time, always without break, indicates itself in parts,  
What always indicates the poet is the crowd of the pleasant company  
of singers, and their words,



The words of the singers are the hours or minutes of the light or dark,  
but the words of the maker of poems are the general light and  
dark,

The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immortality,  
His insight and power encircle things and the human race,  
He is the glory and extract thus far of things and of the human race.

The singers do not beget, only the Poet begets,  
The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear often enough, but rare  
has the day been, likewise the spot, of the birth of the maker of  
poems, the Answerer,  
(Not every century nor every five centuries has contain'd such a day,  
for all its names.)

The singers of successive hours of centuries may have ostensible  
names, but the name of each of them is one of the singers,  
The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer, sweet-singer,  
night-singer, parlor-singer, love-singer, weird-singer, or some-  
thing else.

All this time and at all times wait the words of true poems,  
The words of true poems do not merely please,  
The true poets are not followers of beauty but the august masters of  
beauty;  
The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of mothers and  
fathers,  
The words of true poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason, health, rudeness  
of body, withdrawnness,  
Gayety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are some of the words of poems.

The sailor and traveler underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer,  
The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist, artist, all  
these underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer.

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,  
They give you to form for yourself poems, religions, politics, war,  
peace, behavior, histories, essays, daily life, and every thing else,  
They balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes,  
They do not seek beauty, they are sought,  
Forever touching them or close upon them follows beauty, longing,  
fain, love-sick.

They prepare for death, yet they are not the finish, but rather the  
outset,  
They bring none to his or her terminus or to be content and full,  
Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of stars, to  
learn one of the meanings,  
To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the ceaseless rings  
and never be quiet again.



## OUR OLD FEUILLAGE

ALWAYS our old feuillage!  
Always Florida's green peninsula—always the priceless delta of Louisiana—always the cotton-fields of Alabama and Texas,  
Always California's golden hills and hollows, and the silver mountains of New Mexico—always soft-breath'd Cuba,  
Always the vast slope drain'd by the Southern sea, inseparable with the slopes drain'd by the Eastern and Western seas,  
The area the eighty-third year of these States, the three and a half millions of square miles,  
The eighteen thousand miles of sea-coast and bay-coast on the main, the thirty thousand miles of river navigation,  
The seven millions of distinct families and the same number of dwellings—always these, and more, branching forth into numberless branches,  
Always the free range and diversity—always the continent of Democracy;  
Always the prairies, pastures, forests, vast cities, travelers, Kanada, the snows;  
Always these compact lands tied at the hips with the belt stringing the huge oval lakes;  
Always the West with strong native persons, the increasing density there, the habitans, friendly, threatening, ironical, scorning invaders;

All sights, South, North, East—all deeds promiscuously done at all times,  
All characters, movements, growths, a few noticed, myriads unnoticed,  
Through Mannahatta's streets I walking, these things gathering,  
On interior rivers by night in the glare of pine knots, steamboats  
wooding up,  
Sunlight by day on the valley of the Susquehanna, and on the valleys  
of the Potomac and Rappahannock, and the valleys of the Roan-  
oke and Delaware,  
In their northerly wilds beasts of prey haunting the Adirondacks the  
hills, or lapping the Saginaw waters to drink,  
In a lonesome inlet a sheldrake lost from the flock, sitting on the  
water rocking silently,  
In farmers' barns oxen in the stable, their harvest labor done, they  
rest standing, they are too tired,  
Afar on arctic ice the she-walrus lying drowsily while her cubs play  
around,  
The hawk sailing where men have not yet sail'd, the farthest polar  
sea, rippy, crystalline, open, beyond the floes,  
White drift spooning ahead where the ship in the tempest dashes,  
On solid land what is done in cities as the bells strike midnight to-  
gether,  
In primitive woods the sounds there also sounding, the howl of the  
wolf, the scream of the panther, and the hoarse bellow of the elk,  
In winter beneath the hard blue ice of Moosehead lake, in summer  
visible through the clear waters, the great trout swimming,  
In lower latitudes in warmer air in the Carolinas the large black  
buzzard floating slowly high beyond the tree tops,  
Below, the red cedar festoon'd with tylandria, the pines and cypresses  
growing out of the white sand that spreads far and flat,  
Rude boats descending the big Pedee, climbing plants, parasites with  
color'd flowers and berries enveloping huge trees,  
The waving drapery of the live-oak trailing long and low, noiselessly  
waved by the wind,  
The camp of Georgia wagoners just after dark, the supper-fires and  
the cooking and eating by whites and negroes,  
Thirty or forty great wagons, the mules, cattle, horses, feeding from  
troughs,  
The shadows, gleams, up under the leaves of the old sycamore-trees,  
the flames with the black smoke from the pitch-pine curling and  
rising;

Southern fishermen fishing, the sounds and inlets of North Carolina's coast, the shad-fishery and the herring-fishery, the large sweep-seines, the windlasses on shore work'd by horses, the clearing, curing, and packing-houses;

Deep in the forest in piney woods turpentine dropping from the incisions in the trees, there are the turpentine works,

There are the negroes at work in good health, the ground in all directions is cover'd with pine-straw;

In Tennessee and Kentucky slaves busy in the coalings, at the forge, by the furnace-blaze, or at the corn-shucking,

In Virginia, the planter's son returning after a long absence, joyfully welcom'd and kiss'd by the aged mulatto nurse,

On rivers boatmen safely moor'd at nightfall in their boats under shelter of high banks,

Some of the younger men dance to the sound of the banjo or fiddle, others sit on the gunwale smoking and talking;

Late in the afternoon the mocking-bird, the American mimic, singing in the Great Dismal Swamp,

There are the greenish waters, the resinous odor, the plenteous moss, the cypress-tree, and the juniper-tree;

Northward, young men of Mannahatta, the target company from an excursion returning home at evening, the musket-muzzles all bear bunches of flowers presented by women;

Children at play, or on his father's lap a young boy fallen asleep, (how his lips move! how he smiles in his sleep!)

The scout riding on horseback over the plains west of the Mississippi, he ascends a knoll and sweeps his eyes around;

California life, the miner, bearded, dress'd in his rude costume, the stanch California friendship, the sweet air, the graves one in passing meets solitary just aside the horse-path;

Down in Texas the cotton-field, the negro-cabins, drivers driving mules or oxen before rude carts, cotton bales piled on banks and wharves;

Encircling all, vast-darting up and wide, the American Soul, with equal hemispheres, one Love, one Dilation or Pride;

In arriere the peace-talk with the Iroquois the aborigines, the calumet, the pipe of good-will, arbitration, and indorsement,

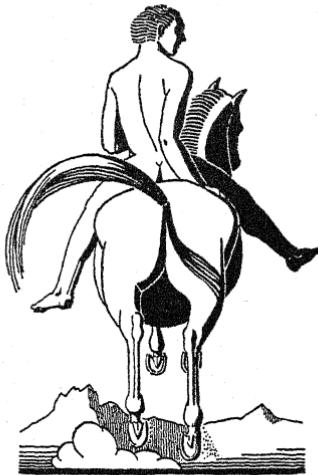
The sachem blowing the smoke first toward the sun and then toward the earth,

The drama of the scalp-dance enacted with painted faces and guttural exclamations,

The setting out of the war-party, the long and stealthy march,  
The single file, the swinging hatchets, the surprise and slaughter of  
enemies;  
All the acts, scenes, ways, persons, attitudes of these States, reminis-  
cences, institutions,  
All these States compact, every square mile of these States without  
excepting a particle;  
Me pleas'd, rambling in lanes and country fields, Paumanok's fields,  
Observing the spiral flight of two little yellow butterflies shuffling  
between each other, ascending high in the air,  
The darting swallow, the destroyer of insects, the fall traveler south-  
ward but returning northward early in the spring,  
The country boy at the close of the day driving the herd of cows and  
shouting to them as they loiter to browse by the roadside,  
The city wharf, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New  
Orleans, San Francisco,  
The departing ships when the sailors heave at the capstan;  
Evening—me in my room—the setting sun,  
The setting summer sun shining in my open window, showing the  
swarm of flies, suspended, balancing in the air in the centre of the  
room, darting athwart, up and down, casting swift shadows in  
specks on the opposite wall where the shine is;  
The athletic American matron speaking in public to crowds of listen-  
ers,  
Males, females, immigrants, combinations, the copiousness, the in-  
dividuality of the States, each for itself—the money-makers,  
Factories, machinery, the mechanical forces, the windlass, lever,  
pulley, all certainties,  
The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity,  
In space the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars—on the firm  
earth, the lands, my lands,  
O lands! all so dear to me—what you are, (whatever it is,) I putting  
it at random in these songs, become a part of that, whatever it is,  
Southward there, I screaming, with wings slow flapping, with the  
myriads of gulls wintering along the coasts of Florida,  
Otherways there atwixt the banks of the Arkansas, the Rio Grande, the  
Nueces, the Brazos, the Tombigbee, the Red River, the Saskatchewan  
or the Osage, I with the spring waters laughing and skipping  
and running,  
Northward, on the sands, on some shallow bay of Paumanok, I with  
parties of snowy herons wading in the wet to seek worms and  
aquatic plants,

Retreating triumphantly twittering, the king-bird, from piercing the crow with its bill, for amusement—and I triumphantly twittering,  
 The migrating flock of wild geese alighting in autumn to refresh them-  
 selves, the body of the flock feed, the sentinels outside move around  
 with erect heads watching, and are from time to time reliev'd by  
 other sentinels—and I feeding and taking turns with the rest,  
 In Kanadian forests the moose, large as an ox, corner'd by hunters,  
 rising desperately on his hind-feet, and plunging with his fore-feet,  
 the hoofs as sharp as knives—and I, plunging at the hunters,  
 corner'd and desperate,  
 In the Mannahatta, streets, piers, shipping, store-houses, and the count-  
 less workmen working in the shops,  
 And I too of the Mannahatta, singing thereof—and no less in myself  
 than the whole of the Mannahatta in itself,  
 Singing the song of These, my ever-united lands—my body no more  
 inevitably united, part to part, and made out of a thousand diverse  
 contributions one identity, any more than my lands are inevitably  
 united and made ONE IDENTITY;  
 Nativities, climates, the grass of the great pastoral Plains,  
 Cities, labors, death, animals, products, war, good and evil—these me,  
 These affording, in all their particulars, the old feuillage to me and  
 to America, how can I do less than pass the clew of the union of  
 them, to afford the like to you?  
 Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine leaves, that you also  
 be eligible as I am?  
 How can I but as here chanting, invite you for yourself to collect  
 bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of these States?





## A SONG OF JOYS

O to make the most jubilant song!  
Full of music—full of manhood, womanhood, infancy!  
Full of common employments—full of grain and trees.

O for the voices of animals—O for the swiftness and balance of fishes!  
O for the dropping of raindrops in a song!  
O for the sunshine and motion of waves in a song!

O the joy of my spirit—it is uncaged—it darts like lightning!  
It is not enough to have this globe or a certain time,  
I will have thousands of globes and all time.

O the engineer's joys! to go with a locomotive!  
To hear the hiss of steam, the merry shriek, the steam-whistle, the  
laughing locomotive!  
To push with resistless way and speed off in the distance.

O the gleesome saunter over fields and hillsides!  
The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds, the moist fresh still-  
ness of the woods,  
The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak, and all through the fore-  
noon.

O the horseman's and horsewoman's joys!  
The saddle, the gallop, the pressure upon the seat, the cool gurgling  
by the ears and hair.

O the fireman's joys!  
I hear the alarm at dead of night,  
I hear bells, shouts! I pass the crowd, I run!  
The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.

O the joy of the strong-brawn'd fighter, towering in the arena in perfect condition, conscious of power, thirsting to meet his opponent.

O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only the human soul is capable of generating and emitting in steady and limitless floods.

O the mother's joys!  
The watching, the endurance, the precious love, the anguish, the patiently yielded life.

O the joy of increase, growth, recuperation,  
The joy of soothing and pacifying, the joy of concord and harmony.

O to go back to the place where I was born,  
To hear the birds sing once more,  
To ramble about the house and barn and over the fields once more,  
And through the orchard and along the old lanes once more.

O to have been brought up on bays, lagoons, creeks, or along the coast,  
To continue and be employ'd there all my life,  
The briny and damp smell, the shore, the salt weeds exposed at low water,  
The work of fishermen, the work of the eel-fisher and clam-fisher;  
I come with my clam-rake and spade, I come with my eel-spear,  
Is the tide out? I join the group of clam-diggers on the flats,  
I laugh and work with them, I joke at my work like a mettlesome young man;  
In winter I take my eel-basket and eel-spear and travel out on foot on the ice—I have a small axe to cut holes in the ice,  
Behold me well-clothed going gayly or returning in the afternoon, my brood of tough boys accompanying me,  
My brood of grown and part-grown boys, who love to be with no one else so well as they love to be with me,  
By day to work with me, and by night to sleep with me.



Another time in warm weather out in a boat, to lift the lobster-pots  
where they are sunk with heavy stones, (I know the buoys,) .

O the sweetness of the Fifth-month morning upon the water as I row  
just before sunrise toward the buoys,

I pull the wicker pots up slantingly, the dark green lobsters are des-  
perate with their claws as I take them out, I insert wooden pegs in  
the joints of their pincers,

I go to all the places one after another, and then row back to the shore,  
There in a huge kettle of boiling water the lobsters shall be boil'd till  
their color becomes scarlet.

Another time mackerel-taking,

Voracious, mad for the hook, near the surface, they seem to fill the  
water for miles;

Another time fishing for rock-fish in Chesapeake Bay, I one of the  
brown-faced crew;

Another time trailing for blue-fish off Paumanok, I stand with braced  
body,

My left foot is on the gunwale, my right arm throws far out the coils  
of slender rope,

In sight around me the quick veering and darting of fifty skiffs, my  
companions.

O boating on the rivers,

The voyage down the St. Lawrence, the superb scenery, the steamers,  
The ships sailing, the Thousand Islands, the occasional timber-raft  
and the raftsmen with long-reaching sweep-oars,

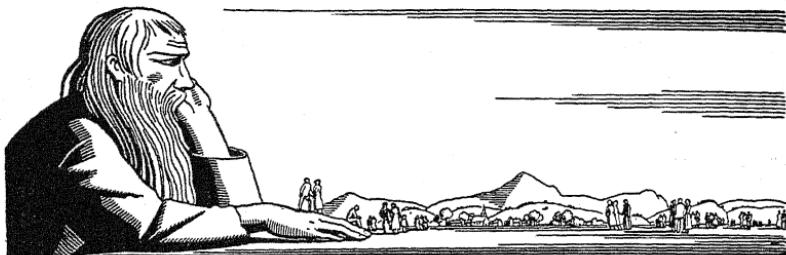
The little huts on the rafts, and the stream of smoke when they cook  
supper at evening.

(O something pernicious and dread!  
Something far away from a puny and pious life!  
Something unproved! something in a trance!  
Something escaped from the anchorage and driving free.)

O to work in mines, or forging iron,  
Foundry casting, the foundry itself, the rude high roof, the ample and  
shadow'd space,  
The furnace, the hot liquid pour'd out and running.

O to resume the joys of the soldier!  
To feel the presence of a brave commanding officer—to feel his sym-  
pathy!  
To behold his calmness—to be warm'd in the rays of his smile!  
To go to battle—to hear the bugles play and the drums beat!  
To hear the crash of artillery—to see the glittering of the bayonets and  
musket-barrels in the sun!  
To see men fall and die and not complain!  
To taste the savage taste of blood—to be so devilish!  
To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the enemy.

O the whaleman's joys! O I cruise my old cruise again!  
I feel the ship's motion under me, I feel the Atlantic breezes fanning  
me,  
I hear the cry again sent down from the mast-head, *There—she blows!*  
Again I spring up the rigging to look with the rest—we descend, wild  
with excitement,  
I leap in the lower'd boat, we row toward our prey where he lies,  
We approach stealthy and silent, I see the mountainous mass, lethargic,  
basking,  
I see the harpooner standing up, I see the weapon dart from his vigor-  
ous arm;  
O swift again far out in the ocean the wounded whale, settling, run-  
ning to windward, tows me,  
Again I see him rise to breathe, we row close again,  
I see a lance driven through his side, press'd deep, turn'd in the wound,  
Again we back off, I see him settle again, the life is leaving him fast,  
As he rises he spouts blood, I see him swim in circles narrower and  
narrower, swiftly cutting the water—I see him die,  
He gives one convulsive leap in the centre of the circle, and then falls  
flat and still in the bloody foam.



O the old manhood of me, my noblest joy of all!  
My children and grand-children, my white hair and beard,  
My largeness, calmness, majesty, out of the long stretch of my life.

O ripen'd joy of womanhood! O happiness at last!  
I am more than eighty years of age, I am the most venerable mother,  
How clear is my mind—how all people draw nigh to me!  
What attractions are these beyond any before? what bloom more than  
the bloom of youth?  
What beauty is this that descends upon me and rises out of me?

O the orator's joys!  
To inflate the chest, to roll the thunder of the voice out from the ribs  
and throat,  
To make the people rage, weep, hate, desire, with yourself,  
To lead America—to quell America with a great tongue.

O the joy of my soul leaning pois'd on itself, receiving identity  
through materials and loving them, observing characters and ab-  
sorbing them,  
My soul vibrated back to me from them, from sight, hearing, touch,  
reason, articulation, comparison, memory, and the like,  
The real life of my senses and flesh transcending my senses and flesh,  
My body done with materials, my sight done with my material eyes,  
Proved to me this day beyond cavil that it is not my material eyes  
which finally see,  
Nor my material body which finally loves, walks, laughs, shouts, em-  
braces, procreates.

O the farmer's joys!  
Ohioan's, Illinoisian's, Wisconsinese', Kanadian's, Iowan's, Kansian's,  
Missourian's, Oregonese' joys!

To rise at peep of day and pass forth nimbly to work,  
To plough land in the fall for winter-sown crops,  
To plough land in the spring for maize,  
To train orchards, to graft the trees, to gather apples in the fall.

O to bathe in the swimming-bath, or in a good place along shore,  
To splash the water! to walk ankle-deep, or race naked along the shore.

O to realize space!  
The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,  
To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and flying clouds, as  
one with them.

O the joy of a manly self-hood!  
To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any tyrant known or  
unknown,  
To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and elastic,  
To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye,  
To speak with a full and sonorous voice out of a broad chest,  
To confront with your personality all the other personalities of the  
earth.

Know'st thou the excellent joys of youth?  
Joys of the dear companions and of the merry word and laughing  
face?  
Joy of the glad light-beaming day, joy of the wide-breath'd games?  
Joy of sweet music, joy of the lighted ball-room and the dancers?  
Joy of the plenteous dinner, strong carouse and drinking?

Yet O my soul supreme!  
Know'st thou the joys of pensive thought?  
Joys of the free and lonesome heart, the tender, gloomy heart?  
Joys of the solitary walk, the spirit bow'd yet proud, the suffering and  
the struggle?  
The agonistic throes, the ecstasies, joys of the solemn musings day or  
night?  
Joys of the thought of Death, the great spheres Time and Space?  
Prophetic joys of better, loftier love's ideals, the divine wife, the sweet,  
eternal, perfect comrade?  
Joys all thine own undying one, joys worthy thee O soul.

O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a slave,  
To meet life as a powerful conqueror,  
No fumes, no ennui, no more complaints or scornful criticisms,  
To these proud laws of the air, the water and the ground, proving my  
interior soul impregnable,  
And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me.

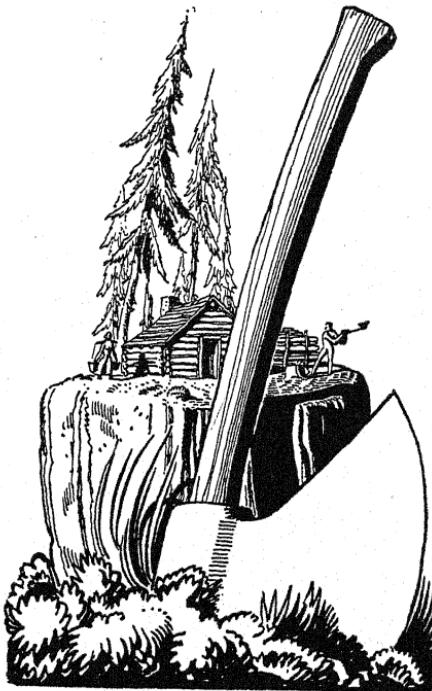
For not life's joys alone I sing, repeating—the joy of death!  
The beautiful touch of Death, soothing and benumbing a few moments, for reasons,  
Myself discharging my excrementitious body to be burn'd, or render'd to powder, or buried,  
My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres,  
My voided body nothing more to me, returning to the purifications,  
further offices, eternal uses of the earth.

O to attract by more than attraction!  
How it is I know not—yet behold! the something which obeys none  
of the rest,  
It is offensive, never defensive—yet how magnetic it draws.

O to struggle against great odds, to meet enemies undaunted!  
To be entirely alone with them, to find how much one can stand!  
To look strife, torture, prison, popular odium, face to face!  
To mount the scaffold, to advance to the muzzles of guns with perfect  
nonchalance!  
To be indeed a God!

O to sail to sea in a ship!  
To leave this steady unendurable land,  
To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the sidewalks and the houses,  
To leave you O you solid motionless land, and entering a ship,  
To sail and sail and sail!

O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys!  
To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on, float on!  
To be a sailor of the world bound for all ports,  
A ship itself, (see indeed these sails I spread to the sun and air,)  
A swift and swelling ship full of rich words, full of joys.



## SONG OF THE BROAD-AXE

### 1

WEAPON shapely, naked, wan,  
Head from the mother's bowels drawn,  
Wooded flesh and metal bone, limb only one and lip only one,  
Gray-blue leaf by red-heat grown, helve produced from a little seed  
sown,  
Resting the grass amid and upon,  
To be lean'd and to lean on.

Strong shapes and attributes of strong shapes, masculine trades, sights  
and sounds,  
Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music,  
Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys of the great  
organ.

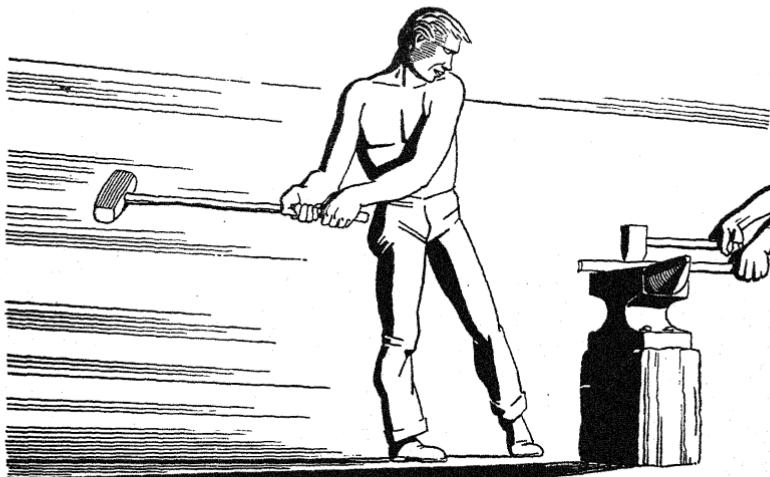
## 2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind,  
Welcome are lands of pine and oak,  
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig,  
Welcome are lands of gold,  
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize, welcome those of the grape,  
Welcome are lands of sugar and rice,  
Welcome the cotton-lands, welcome those of the white potato and  
sweet potato,  
Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies,  
Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, openings,  
Welcome the measureless grazing-lands, welcome the teeming soil of  
orchards, flax, honey, hemp;  
Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands,  
Lands rich as lands of gold or wheat and fruit lands,  
Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores,  
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc,  
Lands of iron—lands of the make of the axe.

## 3

The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it,  
The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space clear'd for a gar-  
den,  
The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves after the storm is  
lull'd,  
The wailing and moaning at intervals, the thought of the sea,  
The thought of ships struck in the storm and put on their beam ends,  
and the cutting away of masts,  
The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd houses and barns,  
The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a venture of men,  
families, goods,  
The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,  
The voyage of those who sought a New England and found it, the out-  
set anywhere,  
The settlements of the Arkansas, Colorado, Ottawa, Willamette,  
The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-bags;  
The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,  
The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men with their clear untrimm'd  
faces,

The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on themselves,  
The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies, the boundless impatience of restraint,  
The loose drift of character, the inkling through random types, the solidification;  
The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard schooners and sloops, the raftsmen, the pioneer,  
Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the woods, stripes of snow on the limbs of trees, the occasional snapping,  
The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry song, the natural life of the woods, the strong day's work.  
The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the talk, the bed of hemlock-boughs and the bear-skin;  
The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,  
The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,  
The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places, laying them regular,  
Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises according as they were prepared,  
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men, their curv'd limbs,  
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, holding on by posts and braces,  
The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the axe,  
The floor-men forcing the planks close to be nail'd,  
Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the bearers,  
The echoes resounding through the vacant building;  
The huge storehouse carried up in the city well under way,  
The six framing-men, two in the middle and two at each end, carefully bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick for a cross-beam,  
The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right hands rapidly laying the long side-wall, two hundred feet from front to rear,  
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of the trowels striking the bricks,  
The bricks one after another each laid so workmanlike in its place, and set with a knock of the trowel-handle,  
The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-boards, and the steady replenishing by the hod-men;  
Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of well-grown apprentices,



The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log shaping it toward the  
shape of a mast,  
The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly into the pine,  
The butter-color'd chips flying off in great flakes and slivers,  
The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in easy cos-  
tumes,  
The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-heads, floats, stays  
against the sea;  
The city fireman, the fire that suddenly bursts forth in the close-pack'd  
square,  
The arriving engines, the hoarse shouts, the nimble stepping and dar-  
ing,  
The strong command through the fire-trumpets, the falling in line, the  
rise and fall of the arms forcing the water,  
The slender, spasmic, blue-white jets, the bringing to bear of the hooks  
and ladders and their execution,  
The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or through floors  
if the fire smoulders under them,  
The crowd with their lit faces watching, the glare and dense shadows;  
The forger at his forge-furnace and the user of iron after him,  
The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder and temperer,  
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel and trying the edge  
with his thumb,

The one who clean-shapes the handle and sets it firmly in the socket;  
The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past users also,  
The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,  
The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,  
The Roman lictors preceding the consuls,  
The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,  
The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted head,  
The death-howl, the limpsy tumbling body, the rush of friend and foe  
thither,  
The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,  
The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates, the truce and  
parley,  
The sack of an old city in its time,  
The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously and dis-  
orderly,  
Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,  
Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of women in the  
gripe of brigands,  
Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old persons de-  
spairing,  
The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,  
The list of all executive deeds and words just or unjust,  
The power of personality just or unjust.

## 4

Muscle and pluck forever!  
What invigorates life invigorates death,  
And the dead advance as much as the living advance,  
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,  
For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much as the  
delicatesse of the earth and of man,  
And nothing endures but personal qualities.

What do you think endures?  
Do you think a great city endures?  
Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared constitution? or the  
best built steamships?  
Or hotels of granite and iron? or any chef-d'œuvres of engineering,  
forts, armaments?

Away! these are not to be cherish'd for themselves,  
They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians play for them,  
The show passes, all does well enough of course,  
All does very well till one flash of defiance.

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,  
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.

## 5

The place where a great city stands is not the place of stretch'd  
    wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of produce merely,  
Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the anchor-lifters  
    of the departing,  
Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops selling  
    goods from the rest of the earth,  
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place where  
    money is plentious,  
Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniet breed of orators and bards,  
Where the city stands that is belov'd by these, and loves them in re-  
turn and understands them,  
Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words and  
    deeds,  
Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,  
Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,  
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,  
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of  
    elected persons,  
Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the whistle of  
    death pours its sweeping and unript waves,  
Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside  
    authority,  
Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and President, Mayor,  
    Governor and what not, are agents for pay,  
Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to depend on  
    themselves,  
Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,  
Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,

Where women walk in public processions in the streets the same as  
the men,  
Where they enter the public assembly and take places the same as the  
men;  
Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,  
Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,  
Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,  
Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,  
There the great city stands.

## 6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed!  
How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels before a man's or  
woman's look!

All waits or goes by default till a strong being appears;  
A strong being is the proof of the race and of the ability of the uni-  
verse,  
When he or she appears materials are overaw'd,  
The dispute on the soul stops,  
The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd back, or laid away.

What is your money-making now? what can it do now?  
What is your respectability now?  
What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions, statute-books,  
now?  
Where are your jibes of being now?  
Where are your cavils about the soul now?

## 7

A sterile landscape covers the ore, there is as good as the best for all  
the forbidding appearance,  
There is the mine, there are the miners,  
The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd, the hammersmen  
are at hand with their tongs and hammers,  
What always served and always serves is at hand.

Than this nothing has better served, it has served all,  
Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and long ere the  
Greek,

Served in building the buildings that last longer than any,  
 Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient Hindustanee,  
 Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi, served those whose relics  
     remain in Central America,  
 Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn pillars and  
     the druids,  
 Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the snow-cover'd hills  
     of Scandinavia,  
 Served those who time out of mind made on the granite walls rough  
     sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships, ocean waves,  
 Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths, served the pastoral  
     tribes and nomads,  
 Served the long distant Kelt, served the hardy pirates of the Baltic,  
 Served before any of those the venerable and harmless men of Ethio-  
     opia,  
 Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure and the mak-  
     ing of those for war,  
 Served all great works on land and all great works on the sea,  
 For the mediæval ages and before the mediæval ages,  
 Served not the living only then as now, but served the dead.

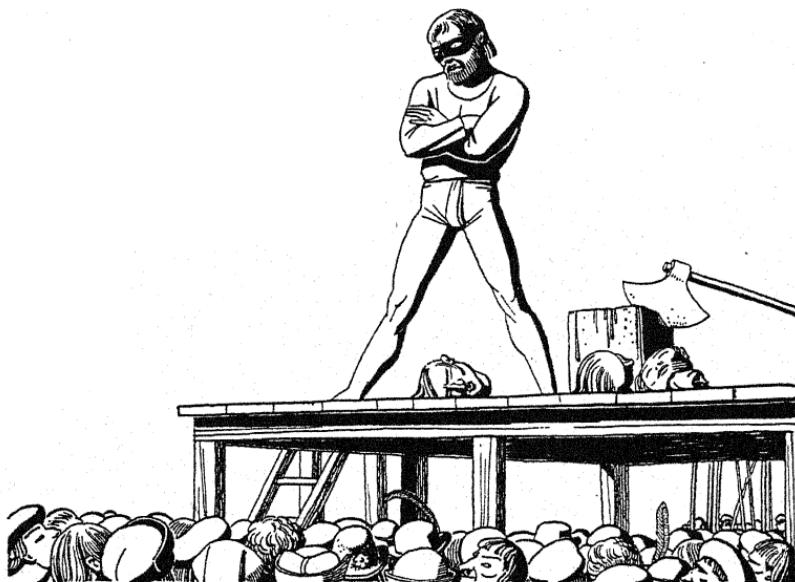
## 8

I see the European headsman,  
 He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs and strong naked  
     arms,  
 And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately European headsman?  
 Whose is that blood upon you so wet and sticky?)

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs,  
 I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,  
 Ghosts of dead lords, uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd ministers, rejected  
     kings,  
 Rivals, traitors, poisoners, disgraced chieftains and the rest.

I see those who in any land have died for the good cause,  
 The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run out,  
 (Mind you O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall never run out.)



I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe,  
 Both blade and helve are clean,  
 They spirt no more the blood of European nobles, they clasp no more  
 the necks of queens.

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless,  
 I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy, I see no longer any axe  
 upon it,  
 I see the mighty and friendly emblem of the power of my own race,  
 the newest, largest race.

## 9

(America! I do not vaunt my love for you,  
 I have what I have.)

The axe leaps!  
 The solid forest gives fluid utterances,  
 They tumble forth, they rise and form,  
 Hut, tent, landing, survey,  
 Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade,  
 Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, jamb, lath, panel, gable,  
 Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ, exhibition-house, library,

Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, turret, porch,  
 Hoe, rake, pitchfork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-plane, mallet,  
 wedge, rounce,  
 Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,  
 Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame, and what not,  
 Capitols of States, and capitol of the nation of States,  
 Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans or for the poor or  
 sick,  
 Manhattan steamboats and clippers taking the measure of all seas.

The shapes arise!

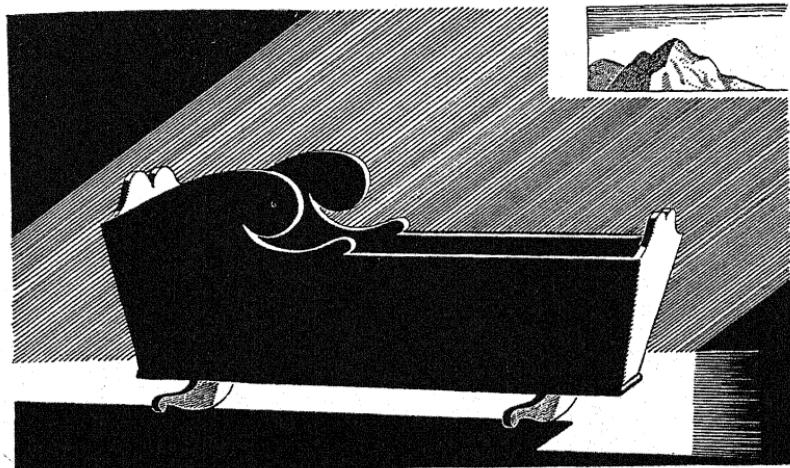
Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users and all that neigh-  
 bors them,  
 Cutters down of wood and haulers of it to the Penobscot or Kennebec,  
 Dwellers in cabins among the Californian mountains or by the little  
 lakes, or on the Columbia,  
 Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande, friendly gath-  
 erings, the characters and fun,  
 Dwellers along the St. Lawrence, or north in Kanada, or down by the  
 Yellowstone, dwellers on coasts and off coasts,  
 Seal-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages through the ice.

The shapes arise!

Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets,  
 Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads,  
 Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks, girders, arches,  
 Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal craft, river craft,  
 Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western seas, and in  
 many a bay and by-place,  
 The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the hackmatack-roots  
 for knees,  
 The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds, the work-  
 men busy outside and inside,  
 The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger, the adze, bolt,  
 line, square, gouge, and bead-plane.

The shapes arise!

The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,  
 The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his shroud,



The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the posts of the  
bride's bed,

The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers beneath, the  
shape of the babe's cradle,

The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for dancer's feet,  
The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of the friendly  
parents and children,

The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young man and  
woman, the roof over the well-married young man and woman,

The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste wife, and joy-  
ously eaten by the chaste husband, content after his day's work.

The shapes arise!

The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room, and of him or her  
seated in the place.

The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the young rum-drinker  
and the old rum-drinker,

The shape of the shamed and angry stairs trod by sneaking footsteps,

The shape of the sly settee, and the adulterous unwholesome couple,

The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish winnings and los-

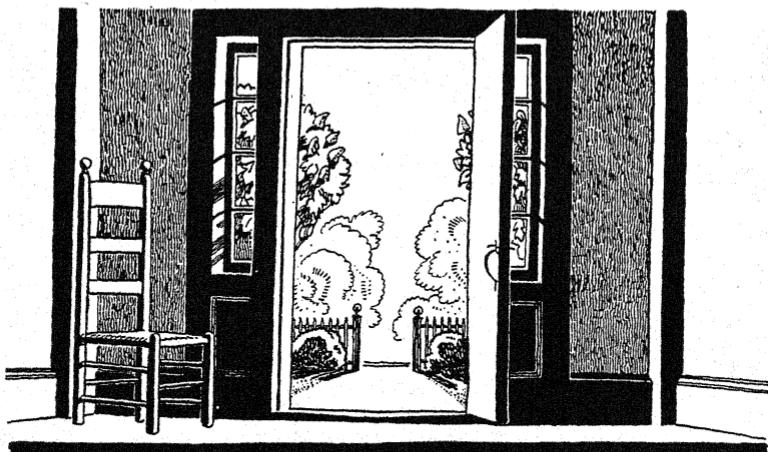
ings,

The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and sentenced murderer,  
the murderer with haggard face and pinion'd arms,

The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and white-lipp'd  
crowd, the dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise!

Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances,  
 The door passing the dissever'd friend flush'd and in haste,  
 The door that admits good news and bad news,  
 The door whence the son left home confident and puff'd up,  
 The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous absence,  
 diseas'd, broken down, without innocence, without means.



## 11

Her shape arises,

She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever,

The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her gross and  
 soil'd,

She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is conceal'd from her,  
 She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor,

She is the best belov'd, it is without exception, she has no reason to  
 fear and she does not fear,

Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions are idle to her  
 as she passes,

She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do not offend her,

She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them, she is strong,

She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger than she is.

The main shapes arise!  
Shapes of Democracy total, result of centuries,  
Shapes ever projecting other shapes,  
Shapes of turbulent manly cities,  
Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole earth,  
Shapes bracing the earth and braced with the whole earth.





## SONG OF THE EXPOSITION

### 1

(Ah little recks the laborer,  
How near his work is holding him to God,  
The loving Laborer through space and time.)

After all not to create only, or found only,  
But to bring perhaps from afar what is already founded,  
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free,  
To fill the gross the torpid bulk with vital religious fire,  
Not to repel or destroy so much as accept, fuse, rehabilitate,  
To obey as well as command, to follow more than to lead,  
These also are the lessons of our New World;  
While how little the New after all, how much the Old, Old World!

Long and long has the grass been growing,  
 Long and long has the rain been falling,  
 Long has the globe been rolling round.

## 2

Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,  
 Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,  
 That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Æneas', Odysseus' wan-  
 derings,  
 Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy Parnas-  
 sus,  
 Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's gate and on  
 Mount Moriah,  
 The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish castles,  
 and Italian collections,  
 For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried domain  
 awaits, demands you.

## 3

Responsive to our summons,  
 Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,  
 Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,  
 She comes! I hear the rustling of her gown,  
 I scent the odor of her breath's delicious fragrance,  
 I mark her step divine, her curious eyes a-turning, rolling,  
 Upon this very scene.

The dame of dames! can I believe then,  
 Those ancient temples, sculptures classic, could none of them retain  
 her?  
 Nor shades of Virgil and Dante, nor myriad memories, poems, old  
 associations, magnetize and hold on to her?  
 But that she's left them all—and here?

Yes, if you will allow me to say so,  
 I, my friend, if you do not, can plainly see her.  
 The same undying soul of earth's, activity's, beauty's, heroism's ex-  
 pression,  
 Out from her evolutions hither come, ended the strata of her former  
 themes,

Hidden and cover'd by to-day's, foundation of to-day's,  
 Ended, deceas'd through time, her voice by Castaly's fountain,  
 Silent the broken-lipp'd Sphynx in Egypt, silent all those century-  
     baffling tombs,  
 Ended for aye the epics of Asia's, Europe's helmeted warriors, ended  
     the primitive call of the muses,  
 Calliope's call forever closed, Clio, Melpomene, Thalia dead,  
 Ended the stately rhythmus of Una and Oriana, ended the quest of the  
     Holy Graal,  
 Jerusalem a handful of ashes blown by the wind, extinct,  
 The Crusaders' streams of shadowy midnight troops sped with the  
     sunrise,  
 Amadis, Tancred, utterly gone, Charlemagne, Roland, Oliver gone,  
 Palmerin, ogre, departed, vanish'd the turrets that Usk from its waters  
     reflected,  
 Arthur vanish'd with all his knights, Merlin and Lancelot and Galahad,  
     all gone, dissolv'd utterly like an exhalation;  
 Pass'd! pass'd! for us, forever pass'd, that once so mighty world, now  
     void, inanimate, phantom world,  
 Embroider'd, dazzling, foreign world, with all its gorgeous legends,  
     myths,  
 Its kings and castles proud, its priests and warlike lords and courtly  
     dames,  
 Pass'd to its charnel vault, coffin'd with crown and armor on,  
 Blazon'd with Shakspere's purple page,  
 And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

I say I see, my friends, if you do not, the illustrious émigré, (having it  
     is true in her day, although the same, changed, journey'd considerable,)

Making directly for this rendezvous, vigorously clearing a path for  
     herself, striding through the confusion,  
 By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismay'd,  
 Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial fertilizers,  
 Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,  
 She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

But hold—don't I forget my manners?  
 To introduce the stranger, (what else indeed do I live to chant for?)  
     to thee Columbia;

In liberty's name welcome immortal! clasp hands,  
And ever henceforth sisters dear be both.

Fear not O Muse! truly new ways and days receive, surround you,  
I candidly confess a queer, queer race, of novel fashion,  
And yet the same old human race, the same within, without,  
Faces and hearts the same, feelings the same, yearnings the same,  
The same old love, beauty and use the same.

## 5

We do not blame thee elder World, nor really separate ourselves from  
thee,  
(Would the son separate himself from the father?)  
Looking back on thee, seeing thee to thy duties, grandeurs, through  
past ages bending, building,  
We build to ours to-day.

Mightier than Egypt's tombs,  
Fairer than Grecia's, Roma's temples,  
Prouder than Milan's statued, spired cathedral,  
More picturesque than Rhenish castle-keeps,  
We plan even now to raise, beyond them all,  
Thy great cathedral sacred industry, no tomb,  
A keep for life for practical invention.

As in a waking vision,  
E'en while I chant I see it rise, I scan and prophesy outside and in,  
Its manifold ensemble.

Around a palace, loftier, fairer, ampler than any yet,  
Earth's modern wonder, history's seven outstripping,  
High rising tier on tier with glass and iron façades,  
Gladdening the sun and sky, enhued in cheerfulest hues,  
Bronze, lilac, robin's-egg, marine and crimson,  
Over whose golden roof shall flaunt, beneath thy banner Freedom,  
The banners of the States and flags of every land,  
A brood of lofty, fair, but lesser palaces shall cluster.

Somewhere within their walls shall all that forwards perfect human  
life be started,  
Tried, taught, advanced, visibly exhibited.

Not only all the world of works, trade, products,  
But all the workmen of the world here to be represented.

Here shall you trace in flowing operation,  
In every state of practical, busy movement, the rills of civilization,  
Materials here under your eye shall change their shape as if by magic,  
The cotton shall be pick'd almost in the very field,  
Shall be dried, clean'd, ginn'd, baled, spun into thread and cloth be-  
fore you,  
You shall see hands at work at all the old processes and all the new  
ones,  
You shall see the various grains and how flour is made and then bread  
baked by the bakers,  
You shall see the crude ores of California and Nevada passing on  
and on till they become bullion,  
You shall watch how the printer sets type, and learn what a compos-  
ing-stick is,  
You shall mark in amazement the Hoe press whirling its cylinders,  
shedding the printed leaves steady and fast,  
The photograph, model, watch, pin, nail, shall be created before you.  
  
In large calm halls, a stately museum shall teach you the infinite les-  
sons of minerals,  
In another, woods, plants, vegetation shall be illustrated—in another  
animals, animal life and development.

One stately house shall be the music house,  
Others for other arts—learning, the sciences, shall all be here,  
None' shall be slighted, none but shall here be honor'd, help'd, ex-  
ampled.

## 6

(This, this and these, America, shall be *your* pyramids and obelisks,  
Your Alexandrian Pharos, gardens of Babylon,  
Your temple at Olympia.)

The male and female many laboring not,  
Shall ever here confront the laboring many,  
With precious benefits to both, glory to all,  
To thee America, and thee eternal Muse.

And here shall ye inhabit powerful Matrons!  
In your vast state vaster than all the old,  
Echoed through long, long centuries to come,  
To sound of different, prouder songs, with stronger themes,  
Practical, peaceful life, the people's life, the People themselves,  
Lifted, illumin'd, bathed in peace—elate, secure in peace.

## 7

Away with themes of war! away with war itself!  
Hence from my shuddering sight to never more return that show of  
blacken'd, mutilated corpses!  
That hell unpeopled and raid of blood, fit for wild tigers or for lop-  
tongued wolves, not reasoning men,  
And in its stead speed industry's campaigns,  
With thy undaunted armies, engineering,  
Thy pennants labor, loosen'd to the breeze,  
Thy bugles sounding loud and clear.

Away with old romance!  
Away with novels, plots and plays of foreign courts,  
Away with love-verses sugar'd in rhyme, the intrigues, amours of  
idlers,  
Fitted for only banquets of the night where dancers to late music slide,  
The unhealthy pleasures, extravagant dissipations of the few.  
With perfumes, heat and wine, beneath the dazzling chandeliers.

To you ye reverent sane sisters,  
I raise a voice for far superber themes for poets and for art,  
To exalt the present and the real,  
To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and trade,  
To sing in songs how exercise and chemical life are never to be baffled,  
To manual work for each and all, to plough, hoe, dig,  
To plant and tend the tree, the berry, vegetables, flowers,  
For every man to see to it that he really do something, for every  
woman too;  
To use the hammer and the saw, (rip, or cross-cut,)  
To cultivate a turn for carpentering, plastering, painting,  
To work as tailor, tailoress, nurse, hostler, porter,  
To invent a little, something ingenious, to aid the washing, cooking,  
cleaning,  
And hold it no disgrace to take a hand at them themselves.

I say, I bring thee Muse to-day and here,  
 All occupations, duties broad and close,  
 Toil, healthy toil and sweat, endless, without cessation,  
 The old, old practical burdens, interests, joys,  
 The family, parentage, childhood, husband and wife,  
 The house-comforts, the house itself and all its belongings,  
 Food and its preservation, chemistry applied to it,  
 Whatever forms the average, strong, complete, sweet-blooded man or  
     woman, the perfect longeve personality,  
 And helps its present life to health and happiness, and shapes its soul,  
 For the eternal real life to come.

With latest connections, works, the inter-transportation of the world,  
 Steam-power, the great express lines, gas, petroleum,  
 These triumphs of our time, the Atlantic's delicate cable,  
 The Pacific railroad, the Suez canal, the Mont Cenis and Gothard and  
     Hoosac tunnels, the Brooklyn bridge,  
 This earth all spann'd with iron rails, with lines of steamships thread-  
     ing every sea,  
 Our own rondure, the current globe I bring.

## 8

And thou America,  
 Thy offspring towering o'er so high, yet higher Thee above all tower-  
     ing,  
 With Victory on thy left, and at thy right hand Law;  
 Thou Union holding all, fusing, absorbing, tolerating all,  
 Thee, ever thee, I sing.

Thou, also thou, a World,  
 With all thy wide geographies, manifold, different, distant,  
 Rounded by thee in one—one common orbic language,  
 One common indivisible destiny for All.

And by the spells which ye vouchsafe to those your ministers in ear-  
     nest,  
 I here personify and call my themes, to make them pass before ye.

Behold, America! (and thou, ineffable guest and sister!)  
 For thee come trooping up thy waters and thy lands;

Behold! thy fields and farms, thy far-off woods and mountains,  
As in procession coming.

Behold, the sea itself,  
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships;  
See, where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle the green  
and blue,  
See, the steamers coming and going, steaming in or out of port,  
See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.

Behold, in Oregon, far in the north and west,  
Or in Maine, far in the north and east, thy cheerful axemen,  
Wielding all day their axes.

Behold, on the lakes, thy pilots at their wheels, thy oarsmen,  
How the ash writhes under those muscular arms!

There by the furnace, and there by the anvil,  
Behold thy sturdy blacksmiths swinging their sledges,  
Overhand so steady, overhand they turn and fall with joyous clank,  
Like a tumult of laughter.

Mark the spirit of invention everywhere, thy rapid patents,  
Thy continual workshops, foundries, risen or rising,  
See, from their chimneys how the tall flame-fires stream.

Mark, thy interminable farms, North, South,  
Thy wealthy daughter-states, Eastern and Western,  
The varied products of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Georgia, Texas,  
and the rest,  
Thy limitless crops, grass, wheat, sugar, oil, corn, rice, hemp, hops,  
Thy barns all fill'd, the endless freight-train and the bulging store-  
house,  
The grapes that ripen on thy vines, the apples in thy orchards,  
Thy incalculable lumber, beef, pork, potatoes, thy coal, thy gold and  
silver,  
The inexhaustible iron in thy mines.

All thine, O sacred Union!  
Ships, farms, shops, barns, factories, mines,

City and State, North, South, item and aggregate,  
We dedicate, dread Mother, all to thee!

Protectress absolute, thou! bulwark of all!  
For well we know that while thou givest each and all, (generous as  
God,) Without thee neither all nor each, nor land, home,  
Nor ship, nor mine, nor any here this day secure,  
Nor aught, nor any day secure.

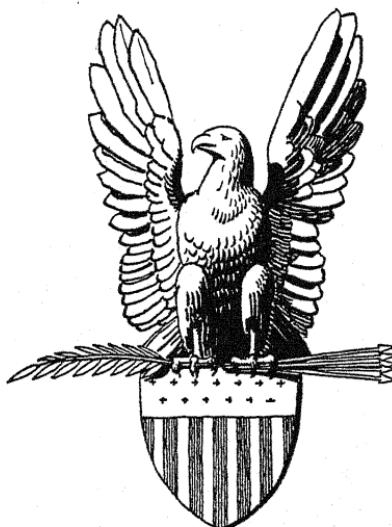
## 9

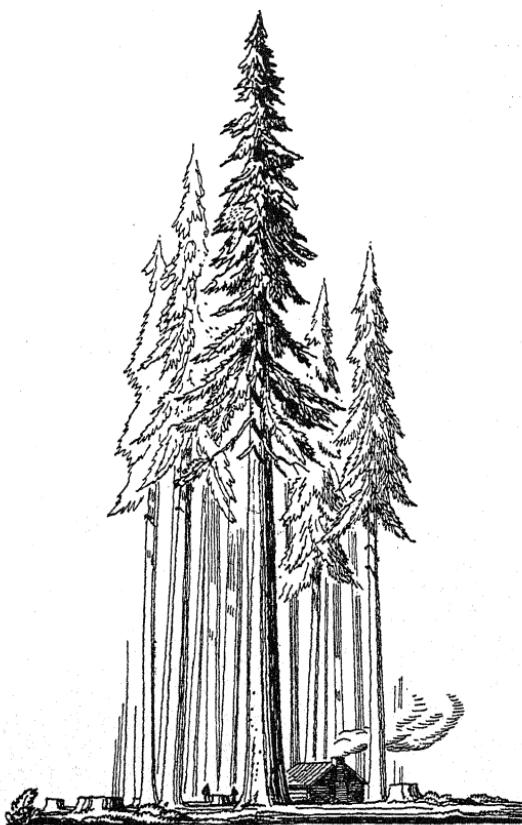
And thou, the Emblem waving over all!  
Delicate beauty, a word to thee, (it may be salutary,) Remember thou hast not always been as here to-day so comfortably  
ensovereign'd,  
In other scenes than these have I observ'd thee flag,  
Not quite so trim and whole and freshly blooming in folds of stain-  
less silk,  
But I have seen thee bunting, to tatters torn upon thy splinter'd staff,  
Or clutch'd to some young color-bearer's breast with desperate hands,  
Savagely struggled for, for life or death, fought over long,  
'Mid cannons' thunder-crash and many a curse and groan and yell,  
and rifle-volleys crackling sharp,  
And moving masses as wild demons surging, and lives as nothing  
risk'd,  
For thy mere remnant grimed with dirt and smoke and sopp'd in  
blood,  
For sake of that, my beauty, and that thou might'st dally as now se-  
cure up there,  
Many a good man have I seen go under.

Now here and there and hence in peace, all thine, O flag!  
And here and hence for thee, O universal Muse! and thou for them!  
And here and hence O Union, all the work and workmen thine!  
None separate from thee—henceforth One only, we and thou,  
(For the blood of the children, what is it, only the blood maternal?  
And lives and works, what are they all at last, except the roads to  
faith and death?)

While we rehearse our measureless wealth, it is for thee, dear Mother,  
We own it all and several to-day indissoluble in thee;

Think not our chant, our show, merely for products gross or lucre—  
it is for thee, the soul in thee, electric, spiritual!  
Our farms, inventions, crops, we own in thee! cities and States in thee!  
Our freedom all in thee! our very lives in thee!





## SONG OF THE REDWOOD-TREE

### 1

A CALIFORNIA song,

A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to breathe as air,  
A chorus of dryads, fading, departing, or hamadryads departing,  
A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the earth and sky,  
Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest dense.

*Farewell my brethren,*

*Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighboring waters,*  
*My time has ended, my term has come.*

Along the northern coast,  
Just back from the rock-bound shore and the caves,  
In the saline air from the sea in the Mendocino country,  
With the surge for base and accompaniment low and hoarse,  
With crackling blows of axes sounding musically driven by strong  
    arms,  
Riven deep by the sharp tongues of the axes, there in the redwood  
    forest dense,  
I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting.

The choppers heard not, the camp shanties echoed not,  
The quick-ear'd teamsters and chain and jack-screw men heard not,  
As the wood-spirits came from their haunts of a thousand years to join  
    the refrain,  
But in my soul I plainly heard.

Murmuring out of its myriad leaves,  
Down from its lofty top rising two hundred feet high,  
Out of its stalwart trunk and limbs, out of its foot-thick bark,  
That chant of the seasons and time, chant not of the past only but the  
    future.

*You untold life of me,  
And all you venerable and innocent joys,  
Perennial hardy life of me with joys 'mid rain and many a summer  
    sun,  
And the white snows and night and the wild winds;  
O the great patient rugged joys, my soul's strong joys unreck'd by  
    man,  
(For know I bear the soul befitting me, I too have consciousness,  
    identity,  
And all the rocks and mountains have, and all the earth,)  
Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,  
Our time, our term has come.*

*Nor yield we mournfully majestic brothers,  
We who have grandly fill'd our time;  
With Nature's calm content, with tacit huge delight,  
We welcome what we wrought for through the past,  
And leave the field for them.  
For them predicted long,*

*For a superber race, they too to grandly fill their time,  
 For them we abdicate, in them ourselves ye forest kings!  
 In them these skies and airs, these mountain peaks, Shasta, Nevadas,  
 These huge precipitous cliffs, this amplitude, these valleys, far Yo-  
 semite,  
 To be in them absorb'd, assimilated.*

Then to a loftier strain,  
 Still prouder, more ecstatic rose the chant,  
 As if the heirs, the deities of the West,  
 Joining with master-tongue bore part.

*Not wan from Asia's fetiches,  
 Nor red from Europe's old dynastic slaughter-house,  
 (Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of wars and scaf-  
 folds everywhere,)  
 But come from Nature's long and harmless throes, peacefully builded  
 thence,  
 These virgin lands, lands of the Western shore,  
 To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new,  
 You promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate.*

*You occult deep volitions,  
 You average spiritual manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on yourself,  
 -giving not taking law,  
 You womanhood divine, mistress and source of all, whence life and  
 love and aught that comes from life and love,  
 You unseen moral essence of all the vast materials of America, (age  
 upon age working in death the same as life,)  
 You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really shape and mould  
 the New World, adjusting it to Time and Space,  
 You hidden national will lying in your abyssms, conceal'd but ever  
 alert,  
 You past and present purposes tenaciously pursued, may-be uncon-  
 scious of yourselves,  
 Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations of the surface;  
 You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds, arts, statutes,  
 literatures,  
 Here build your homes for good, establish here, these areas entire,  
 lands of the Western shore,  
 We pledge, we dedicate to you.*

*For man of you, your characteristic race,  
Here may be hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower proportionate to  
Nature,  
Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck'd by wall or roof,  
Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently inure,  
Here heed himself, unfold himself, (not others' formulas heed,) here  
fill his time,  
To duly fall, to aid, unwreck'd at last,  
To disappear, to serve.*

Thus on the northern coast,  
In the echo of teamsters' calls and the clinking chains, and the music  
of choppers' axes,  
The falling trunk and limbs, the crash, the muffled shriek, the groan,  
Such words combined from the redwood-tree, as of voices ecstatic,  
ancient and rustling,  
The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, withdrawing,  
All their recesses of forests and mountains leaving,  
From the Cascade range to the Wasatch, or Idaho far, or Utah,  
To the deities of the modern henceforth yielding,  
The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming humanity, the settle-  
ments, features all,  
In the Mendocino woods I caught.

## 2

The flashing and golden pageant of California,  
The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny and ample lands,  
The long and varied stretch from Puget sound to Colorado south,  
Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air, valleys and mountain  
cliffs,  
The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow, the silent, cyclic chem-  
istry,  
The slow and steady ages plodding, the unoccupied surface ripening,  
the rich ores forming beneath;  
At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession,  
A swarming and busy race settling and organizing everywhere,  
Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going out to the  
whole world,  
To India and China and Australia and the thousand island paradises  
of the Pacific,

Populous cities, the latest inventions, the steamers on the rivers, the railroads, with many a thrifty farm, with machinery,  
And wool and wheat and the grape, and diggings of yellow gold.

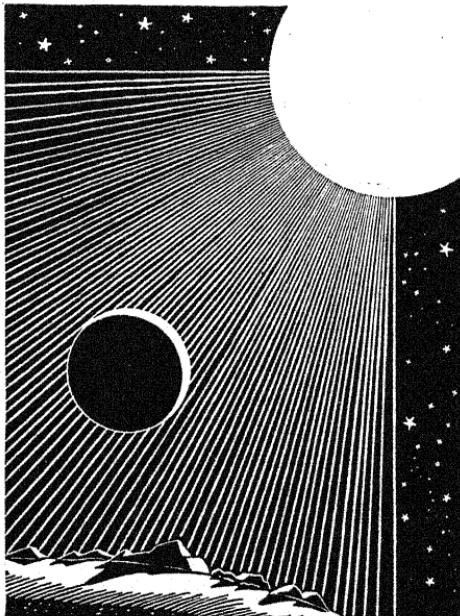
## 3

But more in you than these, lands of the Western shore,  
(These but the means, the implements, the standing-ground,) I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands of years, till now deferr'd,  
Promis'd to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the race.

The new society at last, proportionate to Nature,  
In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or stalwart trees imperial,  
In woman more, far more, than all your gold or vines, or even vital air.

Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,  
I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and ideal,  
Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America, heir of the past so grand,  
To build a grander future.





## A SONG FOR OCCUPATIONS

### 1

A SONG for occupations!

In the labor of engines and trades and the labor of fields I find the developments,

And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen!

Were all educations practical and ornamental well display'd out of me, what would it amount to?

Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise statesman, what would it amount to?

Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would that satisfy you?

The learn'd, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms,  
A man like me and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master I,  
I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will have my own  
whoever enjoys me,  
I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop I stand as nigh as the nighest in the  
same shop,  
If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend I demand as  
good as your brother or dearest friend,  
If your lover, husband, wife, is welcome by day or night, I must be  
personally as welcome,  
If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for your sake,  
If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do you think I  
cannot remember my own foolish and outlaw'd deeds?  
If you carouse at the table I carouse at the opposite side of the table,  
If you meet some stranger in the streets and love him or her, why I  
often meet strangers in the street and love them.

Why what have you thought of yourself?  
Is it you then that thought yourself less?  
Is it you that thought the President greater than you?  
Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than you?

(Because you are greasy or pimpled, or were once drunk, or a thief,  
Or that you are diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute,  
Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar and never  
saw your name in print,  
Do you give in that you are any less immortal?)

## 2

Souls of men and women! it is not you I call unseen, unheard, un-  
touchable and untouched,  
It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle whether you  
are alive or no,  
· I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns.

Grown, half-grown and babe, of this country and every country, in-  
doors and out-doors, one just as much as the other, I see,  
And all else behind or through them.

The wife, and she is not one jot less than the husband,  
The daughter, and she is just as good as the son,  
The mother, and she is every bit as much as the father.

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,  
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working on farms,  
Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,  
All these I see, but nigher and farther the same I see,  
None shall escape me and none shall wish to escape me.

I bring what you much need yet always have,  
Not money, amours, dress, eating, erudition, but as good,  
I send no agent or medium, offer no representative of value, but offer  
the value itself.

There is something that comes to one now and perpetually,  
It is not what is printed, preach'd, discussed, it eludes discussion and  
print,  
It is not to be put in a book, it is not in this book,  
It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther from you than your  
hearing and sight are from you,  
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest, it is ever provoked by  
them.

You may read in many languages, yet read nothing about it,  
You may read the President's message and read nothing about it there,  
Nothing in the reports from the State department or Treasury de-  
partment, or in the daily papers or weekly papers,  
Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or any accounts of  
stock.

## 3

The sun and stars that float in the open air,  
The apple-shaped earth and we upon it, surely the drift of them is  
something grand,  
I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and that it is happiness,  
And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation or bon-  
mot or reconnoissance,  
And that it is not something which by luck may turn out well for us,  
and without luck must be a failure for us,

And not something which may yet be retracted in a certain contingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and identity, the greed  
that with perfect complaisance devours all things,

The endless pride and outstretching of man, unspeakable joys and  
sorrows,

The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees, and the wonders  
that fill each minute of time forever,

What have you reckon'd them for, camerado?

Have you reckon'd them for your trade or farm-work? or for the  
profits of your store?

Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's leisure, or  
a lady's leisure?

Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance and form that  
it might be painted in a picture?

Or men and women that they might be written of, and songs sung?

Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and harmonious com-  
binations and the fluids of the air, as subjects for the savans?

Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts?

Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy names?

Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables, or agriculture  
itself?

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, legends, collections, and the  
practice handed along in manufactures, will we rate them so  
high?

Will we rate our cash and business high? I have no objection,

I rate them as high as the highest—then a child born of a woman and  
man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and our Constitution grand,  
I do not say they are not grand and good, for they are,  
I am this day just as much in love with them as you,  
Then I am in love with You, and with all my fellows upon the earth.

We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say they are not  
divine,

I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still,  
It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life,  
Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the earth, than  
they are shed out of you.

The sum of all known reverence I add up in you whoever you are,  
The President is there in the White House for you, it is not you who  
are here for him,  
The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you, not you here for them,  
The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month for you,  
Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters of cities, the going  
and coming of commerce and mails, are all for you.

List close my scholars dear,  
Doctrines, politics and civilization exurge from you,  
Sculpture and monuments and any thing inscribed anywhere are  
tallied in you,  
The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records reach is  
in you this hour, and myths and tales the same,  
If you were not breathing and walking here, where would they all be?  
The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and plays would  
be vacuums.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it,  
(Did you think it was the white or gray stone? or the lines of the  
arches and cornices?)

All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded by the  
instruments,  
It is not the violins and the cornets, it is not the oboe nor the beating  
drums, nor the score of the baritone singer singing his sweet  
romanza, nor that of the men's chorus, nor that of the women's  
chorus,  
It is nearer and farther than they.

Will the whole come back then?  
Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-glass? is there  
nothing greater or more?  
Does all sit there with you, with the mystic unseen soul?

Strange and hard that paradox true I give,  
Objects gross and the unseen soul are one.

House-building, measuring, sawing the boards,  
Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering, tin-roofing,  
shingle-dressing,  
Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, flagging of sidewalks by  
flaggers,  
The pump, the pile-driver, the great derrick, the coal-kiln and brick-  
kiln,  
Coal-mines and all that is down there, the lamps in the darkness,  
echoes, songs, what meditations, what vast native thoughts looking  
through smutch'd faces,  
Iron-works, forge-fires in the mountains or by river-banks, men around  
feeling the melt with huge crowbars, lumps of ore, the due com-  
bining of ore, limestone, coal,  
The blast-furnace and the puddling-furnace, the loup-lump at the  
bottom of the melt at last, the rolling-mill, the stumpy bars of pig-  
iron, the strong, clean-shaped T-rail for railroads,  
Oil-works, silk-works, white-lead-works, the sugar-house, steam-saws,  
the great mills and factories,  
Stone-cutting, shapely trimmings for façade or window or door-lintels,  
the mallet, the tooth-chisel, the jib to protect the thumb,  
The calking-iron, the kettle of boiling vault-cement, and the fire under  
the kettle,  
The cotton-bale, the stevedore's hook, the saw and buck of the sawyer,  
the mould of the moulder, the working-knife of the butcher, the  
ice-saw, and all the work with ice,  
The work and tools of the rigger, grappler, sail-maker, block-maker,  
Goods of gutta-percha, papier-maché, colors, brushes, brush-making,  
glazier's implements,  
The veneer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments, the decanter  
and glasses, the shears and flat-iron,  
The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart measure, the  
counter and stool, the writing-pen of quill or metal, the making  
of all sorts of edged tools,  
The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, everything that is done by  
brewers, wine-makers, vinegar-makers,  
Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-twisting, distill-  
ing, sign-painting, lime-burning, cotton-picking, electroplating,  
electrotyping, stereotyping,  
Stave-machines, planing-machines, reaping-machines, ploughing-  
machines, thrashing-machines, steam wagons,  
The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray,

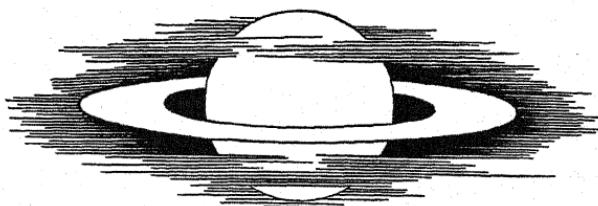
Pyrotechny, letting off color'd fireworks at night, fancy figures and jets,  
Beef on the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the butcher, the butcher in his killing-clothes,  
The pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook, the scalders tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the packer's maul, and the plenteous winterwork of pork-packing,  
Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice, the barrels and the half and quarter barrels, the loaded barges, the high piles on wharves and levees,  
The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroad, coasters, fish-boats, canals;  
The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the shop, yard, store, or factory,  
These shows all near you by day and night—workman! whoever you are, your daily life!  
In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that and them far more than you estimated, (and far less also,)  
In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you and me,  
In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all things, regardless of estimation,  
In them the development good—in them all themes, hints, possibilities.

I do not affirm that what you see beyond is futile, I do not advise you to stop,  
I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,  
But I say that none lead to greater than these lead to.

## 6

Will you seek afar off? you surely come back at last,  
In things best known to you finding the best, or as good as the best,  
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest, lovingest,  
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place, not for another hour but this hour,  
Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend, brother, nighest neighbor—woman in mother, sister, wife,  
The popular tastes and employments taking precedence in poems or anywhere,  
You workwomen and workmen of these States having your own divine and strong life,  
And all else giving place to men and women like you.

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,  
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,  
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver that carved  
    the supporting desk,  
When I can touch the body of books by night or by day, and when  
    they touch my body back again,  
When a university course convinces like a slumbering woman and  
    child convince,  
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-watchman's  
    daughter,  
When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are my friendly  
    companions,  
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much of them as I do  
    of men and women like you.





## A SONG OF THE ROLLING EARTH

### 1

A song of the rolling earth, and of words according,

Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright lines?  
those curves, angles, dots?

No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in the ground  
and sea,

They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words, those delicious sounds  
out of your friends' mouths?

No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,

(In the best poems re-appears the body, man's or woman's well-  
shaped, natural, gay,

Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or the need of  
shame.)

Air, soil, water, fire—those are words,  
I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate with  
theirs—my name is nothing to them,  
Though it were told in the three thousand languages, what would air,  
soil, water, fire, know of my name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture, are words,  
sayings, meanings,  
The charms that go with the mere looks of some men and women, are  
sayings and meanings also.

The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words of the earth,  
The masters know the earth's words and use them more than audible  
words.

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,  
The earth neither lags nor hastens,  
It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself from the jump,  
It is not half beautiful only, defects and excrescences show just as  
much as perfections show.

The earth does not withhold, it is generous enough,  
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not so conceal'd  
either,  
They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print,  
They are imbued through all things conveying themselves willingly,  
Conveying a sentiment and invitation, I utter and utter,  
I speak not, yet if you hear me not of what avail am I to you?  
To bear, to better, lacking these of what avail am I?

(Accouche! accouchez!  
Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there?  
Will you squat and stifle there?)

The earth does not argue,  
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,  
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,  
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,  
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,  
Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies, shuts none out.

The earth does not exhibit itself nor refuse to exhibit itself, possesses  
still underneath,

Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus of heroes, the  
wail of slaves,  
Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying, laughter of young  
people, accents of bargainers,  
Underneath these possessing words that never fail.

To her children the words of the eloquent dumb great mother never  
fail,  
The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail and reflection  
does not fail,  
Also the day and night do not fail, and the voyage we pursue does  
not fail.

Of the interminable sisters,  
Of the ceaseless cotillions of sisters,  
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder and younger sisters,  
The beautiful sister we know dances on with the rest.

With her ample back towards every beholder,  
With the fascinations of youth and the equal fascinations of age,  
Sits she whom I too love like the rest, sits undisturb'd,  
Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror, while  
her eyes glance back from it,  
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,  
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her own face.

Seen at hand or seen at a distance,  
Duly the twenty-four appear in public every day.  
Duly approach and pass with their companions or a companion,  
Looking from no countenances of their own, but from the counte-  
nances of those who are with them.  
From the countenances of children or women or the manly counte-  
nance,  
From the open countenances of animals or from inanimate things,  
From the landscape or waters or from the exquisite apparition of the  
sky,  
From our countenances, mine and yours, faithfully returning them,  
Every day in public appearing without fail, but never twice with the  
same companions.

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three hundred and sixty-five resistlessly round the sun;

Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three hundred and sixty-five offsets of the first, sure and necessary as they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,  
 Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, forever withstanding, passing, carrying,  
 The soul's realization and determination still inheriting,  
 The fluid vacuum around and ahead still entering and dividing,  
 No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on no rock striking,  
 Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing losing,  
 Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,  
 The divine ship sails the divine sea.

## 2

Whoever you are! motion and reflection are especially for you,  
 The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is solid and liquid,

You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the sky,  
 For none more than you are the present and the past,  
 For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself, is the word of the past and present, and the true word of immortality;  
 No one can acquire for another—not one,  
 Not one can grow for another—not one.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him,  
 The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him,  
 The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most to him,  
 The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,  
 The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,  
 The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—it cannot fail,  
 The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor and actress not to the audience,  
 And no man understands any greatness or goodness but his own, or the indication of his own.

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who shall be complete,

The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who remains jagged and broken.

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate those of the earth,

There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate the theory of the earth,

No politics, song, religion, behavior, or what not, is of account, unless it compare with the amplitude of the earth,

Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than that which responds love,

It is that which contains itself, which never invites and never refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,

All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings of the earth,

Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the truths of the earth,

Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print cannot touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best,

It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot,

My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,

My breath will not be obedient to its organs,

I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow, all or any is best,

It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper, easier, nearer,

Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before,

The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,

Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as real as before,

But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,  
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it.  
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

## 4

These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,  
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what were they then?  
If they had not reference to you in especial what were they then?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith that tells the  
best,  
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best untold.

Say on, sayers! sing on, singers!  
Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth!  
Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,  
It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use,  
When the materials are all prepared and ready, the architects shall  
appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,  
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,  
The greatest among them shall be he who best knows you, and encloses  
all and is faithful to all,  
He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive that you are  
not an iota less than they,  
You shall be fully glorified in them.

## YOUTH, DAY, OLD AGE AND NIGHT

YOUTH, large, lusty, loving—youth full of grace, force, fascination,  
Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal grace,  
force, fascination?

Day full-blown and splendid—day of the immense sun, action, ambition,  
laughter,  
The Night follows close with millions of suns, and sleep and restoring  
darkness.



## BIRDS OF PASSAGE

### SONG OF THE UNIVERSAL

#### 1

COME said the Muse,  
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted.  
Sing me the universal.

In this broad earth of ours,  
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,  
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,  
Nestles the seed perfection.

By every life a share or more or less,  
None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd the seed is waiting.

#### 2

Lo! keen-eyed towering science,  
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking,  
Successive absolute fias issuing.

Yet again, lo! the soul, above all science,  
 For it has history gather'd like husks around the globe,  
 For it the entire star-myriads roll through the sky.

In spiral routes by long detours,  
 (As a much-tacking ship upon the sea,)  
 For it the partial to the permanent flowing,  
 For it the real to the ideal tends.

For it the mystic evolution,  
 Not the right only justified, what we call evil also justified.  
 Forth from their masks, no matter what,  
 From the huge festering trunk, from craft and guile and tears,  
 Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.

Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,  
 Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds of men and states,  
 Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,  
 Only the good is universal.

## 3

Over the mountain-growth's disease and sorrow,  
 An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering,  
 High in the purer, happier air.

From imperfection's murkiest cloud,  
 Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,  
 One flash of heaven's glory.

To fashion's, custom's discard,  
 To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,  
 Soothing each lull a strain is heard, just heard,  
 From some far shore the final chorus sounding.

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,  
 That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,  
 Along the mighty labyrinth.

## 4

And thou America,  
 For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its reality,  
 For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived.

Thou too surroundest all,  
 Embracing carrying welcoming all, thou too by pathways broad and  
 new,  
 To the ideal tendest.

The measur'd faiths of other lands, the grandeurs of the past,  
 Are not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own,  
 Deific faiths and amplitudes, absorbing, comprehending all,  
 All eligible to all.

All, all for immortality,  
 Love like the light silently wrapping all,  
 Nature's amelioration blessing all,  
 The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,  
 Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images ripening.

Give me O God to sing that thought,  
 Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith  
 In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not from us,  
 Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,  
 Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream?  
 Nay but the lack of it the dream,  
 And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,  
 And all the world a dream.

### PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

COME my tan-faced children,  
 Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,  
 Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,  
 We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,  
 We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,  
 So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,  
 Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?  
 Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond the  
 seas?  
 We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,  
 We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,  
 Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!



We detachments steady throwing,  
 Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,  
 Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways,  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,  
 We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the mines within,  
 We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,  
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the high plateaus,  
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail we come,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,  
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the continental blood  
intervein'd,  
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all the Northern,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless restless race!  
O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender love for all!  
O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Raise the mighty mother mistress,  
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mistress, (bend  
your heads all,)  
Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive, weapon'd  
mistress,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children, resolute children,  
By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or falter,  
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us urging,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks,  
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead quickly fill'd,  
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!  
Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?  
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is fill'd,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the world,  
Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement beat,  
Holding single or together, steady moving to the front, all for us,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,  
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,  
All the seamen and the landsmen, all the masters with their slaves,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent lovers,  
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the wicked,  
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and body,  
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,  
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions pressing,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Lo, the darting bowling orb!  
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns and planets,  
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

These are of us, they are with us,  
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in embryo wait  
behind,  
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel clearing,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you daughters of the West!  
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives!  
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Minstrels latent on the prairies!  
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have done your  
work,)  
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp amid us,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Not for delectations sweet,  
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,  
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Do the feasters glutinous feast?  
 Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd and bolted doors?  
 Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Has the night descended?  
 Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged nodding  
     on our way?  
 Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause oblivious,  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Till with sound of trumpet,  
 Far, far off the daybreak call—hark! how loud and clear I hear it  
     wind,  
 Swift! to the head of the army!—swift! spring to your places,  
 Pioneers! O pioneers!



#### TO YOU

WHOEVER you are, I fear you are walking the walks of dreams,  
 I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your feet and  
     hands,  
 Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade, manners, troubles,  
     follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from you,  
 Your true soul and body appear before me,  
 They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops, work, farms,  
     clothes, the house, buying, selling, eating, drinking, suffering,  
     dying.

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you be my  
     poem,  
 I whisper with my lips close to your ear,  
 I have loved many women and men, but I love none better than you.  
  
 O I have been dilatory and dumb,  
 I should have made my way straight to you long ago,

I should have blabb'd nothing but you, I should have chanted nothing but you.

I will leave all and come and make the hymns of you,  
None has understood you, but I understand you,  
None has done justice to you, you have not done justice to yourself,  
None but has found you imperfect, I only find no imperfection in you,  
None but would subordinate you, I only am he who will never consent  
to subordinate you,  
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better, God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups and the centre-figure of all,  
From the head of the centre-figure spreading a nimbus of gold-color'd light,  
But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-color'd light,  
From my hand from the brain of every man and woman it streams, effulgently flowing forever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you!  
You have not known what you are, you have slumber'd upon yourself all your life,  
Your eyelids have been the same as closed most of the time,  
What you have done returns already in mockeries,  
(Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return in mockeries, what is their return?)

The mockeries are not you,  
Underneath them and within them I see you lurk,  
I pursue you where none else has pursued you,  
Silence, the dusk, the flippant expression, the night, the accustom'd routine, if these conceal you from others or from yourself, they do not conceal you from me,  
The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if these balk others they do not balk me.  
The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness, greed, premature death, all these I part aside.

There is no endowment in man or woman that is not tallied in you,  
There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but as good is in you,

No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you,  
 No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure waits for you.

As for me, I give nothing to any one except I give the like carefully  
 to you,

I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner than I sing the  
 songs of the glory of you.

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard!

These shows of the East and West are tame compared to you,  
 These immense meadows, these interminable rivers, you are immense  
 and interminable as they,

These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes of apparent  
 dissolution, you are he or she who is master or mistress over them,  
 Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, elements, pain, pas-  
 sion, dissolution.

The hopples fall from your ankles, you find an unfailing sufficiency,  
 Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by the rest, what-  
 ever you are promulges itself,

Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided, nothing  
 is scanted,

Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what you are  
 picks its way.



## FRANCE

*The 18th Year of these States*

A GREAT year and place,

A harsh discordant natal scream out-sounding, to touch the mother's  
 heart closer than any yet.

I walk'd the shores of my Eastern sea,  
 Heard over the waves the little voice,

Saw the divine infant where she woke mournfully wailing, amid the roar of cannon, curses, shouts, crash of falling buildings,  
 Was not so sick from the blood in the gutters running, nor from the single corpses, nor those in heaps, nor those borne away in the tumbrils,  
 Was not so desperate at the battues of death—was not so shock'd at the repeated fusillades of the guns.

Pale, silent, stern, what could I say to that long-accrued retribution?  
 Could I wish humanity different?  
 Could I wish the people made of wood and stone?  
 Or that there be no justice in destiny or time?

O Liberty! O mate for me!  
 Here too the blaze, the grape-shot and the axe, in reserve, to fetch them out in case of need,  
 Here too, though long represt, can never be destroy'd,  
 Here too could rise at last murdering and ecstatic,  
 Here too demanding full arrears of vengeance.

Hence I sign this salute over the sea.  
 And I do not deny that terrible red birth and baptism,  
 But remember the little voice that I heard wailing, and wait with perfect trust, no matter how long,  
 And from to-day sad and cogent I maintain the bequeath'd cause, as for all lands,  
 And I send these words to Paris with my love,  
 And I guess some chansonniers there will understand them,  
 For I guess there is latent music yet in France, floods of it,  
 O I hear already the bustle of instruments, they will soon be drowning all that would interrupt them,  
 O I think the east wind brings a triumphal and free march,  
 It reaches hither, it swells me to joyful madness,  
 I will run transpose it in words, to justify it,  
 I will yet sing a song for you ma femme.

#### MYSELF AND MINE

MYSELF and mine gymnastic ever,  
 To stand the cold or heat, to take good aim with a gun, to sail a boat,  
     to manage horses, to beget superb children,  
 To speak readily and clearly, to feel at home among common people,  
 And to hold our own in terrible positions on land and sea.

Not for an embroiderer,  
(There will always be plenty of embroiderers, I welcome them also,) But for the fibre of things and for inherent men and women.

Not to chisel ornaments,  
But to chisel with free stroke the heads and limbs of plenteous supreme  
Gods, that the States may realize them walking and talking.

Let me have my own way,  
Let others promulge laws, I will make no account of the laws,  
Let others praise eminent men and hold up peace, I hold up agitation  
and conflict,  
I praise no eminent man, I rebuke to his face the one that was thought  
most worthy.

(Who are you? and what are you secretly guilty of all your life?  
Will you turn aside all your life? will you grub and chatter all your  
life?  
And who are you, blabbing by rote, years, pages, languages, remi-  
niscences,  
Unwitting to-day that you do not know how to speak properly a  
single word?)

Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,  
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does, fresh and modern  
continually.

I give nothing as duties,  
What others give as duties I give as living impulses,  
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

Let others dispose of questions, I dispose of nothing, I arouse un-  
answerable questions,  
Who are they I see and touch, and what about them?  
What about these likes of myself that draw me so close by tender  
directions and indirections?

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends, but listen  
to my enemies, as I myself do,  
I charge you forever reject those who would expound me, for I can-  
not expound myself,

I charge that there be no theory or school founded out of me,  
I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.

After me, vista!

O I see life is not short, but immeasurably long,  
I henceforth tread the world chaste, temperate, an early riser, a steady  
grower,  
Every hour the semen of centuries, and still of centuries.

I must follow up these continual lessons of the air, water, earth,  
I perceive I have no time to lose.

### YEAR OF METEORS

(1859-60)

YEAR of meteors! brooding year!

I would bind in words retrospective some of your deeds and signs,  
I would sing your contest for the 19th Presidentialad,  
I would sing how an old man, tall, with white hair, mounted the scaf-  
fold in Virginia,

(I was at hand, silent I stood with teeth shut close, I watch'd,  
I stood very near you old man when cool and indifferent, but trem-  
bling with age and your unheal'd wounds, you mounted the scaf-  
fold;)

I would sing in my copious song your census returns of the States,  
The tables of population and products. I would sing of your ships  
and their cargoes,

The proud black ships of Manhattan arriving, some fill'd with immi-  
grants, some from the isthmus with cargoes of gold,  
Songs thereof would I sing, to all that hitherward comes would I wel-  
come give,

And you would I sing, fair stripling! welcome to you from me, young  
prince of England!

(Remember you surging Manhattan's crowds as you pass'd with your  
cortege of nobles?

There in the crowds stood I, and singled you out with attachment;) Nor forget I to sing of the wonder, the ship as she swam up my bay.  
Well-shaped and stately the Great Eastern swam up my bay, she was  
600 feet long.

Her moving swiftly surrounded by myriads of small craft I forgot  
not to sing;

Nor the comet that came unannounced out of the north flaring in  
heaven,  
Nor the strange huge meteor-procession dazzling and clear shooting  
over our heads,  
(A moment, a moment long it sail'd its balls of unearthly light over  
our heads,  
Then departed, dropt in the night, and was gone;) Of such, and fitful as they, I sing—with gleams from them would I  
gleam and patch these chants,  
Your chants, O year all mottled with evil and good—year of fore-  
bodings!

Year of comets and meteors transient and strange—lo! even here one  
equally transient and strange!  
As I flit through you hastily, soon to fall and be gone, what is this  
chant,  
What am I myself but one of your meteors?

## WITH ANTECEDENTS

## 1

WITH antecedents,  
With my fathers and mothers and the accumulations of past ages,  
With all which, had it not been, I would not now be here, as I am,  
With Egypt, India, Phenicia, Greece and Rome,  
With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb and the Saxon,  
With antique maritime ventures, laws, artisanship, wars and journeys,  
With the poet, the skald, the saga, the myth, and the oracle,  
With the sale of slaves, with enthusiasts, with the troubadour, the  
crusader, and the monk,  
With those old continents whence we have come to this new continent,  
With the fading kingdoms and kings over there,  
With the fading religions and priests,  
With the small shores we look back to from our own large and present  
shores,  
With countless years drawing themselves onward and arrived at these  
years,  
You and me arrived—America arrived and making this year,  
This year! sending itself ahead countless years to come.

## 2

O but it is not the years—it is I, it is You,  
 We touch all laws and tally all antecedents,  
 We are the skald, the oracle, the monk and the knight, we easily in-  
     clude them and more,  
 We stand amid time beginningless and endless, we stand amid evil  
     and good,  
 All swings around us, there is as much darkness as light,  
 The very sun swings itself and its system of planets around us,  
 Its sun, and its again, all swing around us.

As for me, (torn, stormy, amid these vehement days,) I have the idea of all, and am all and believe in all, I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true, I reject no part.

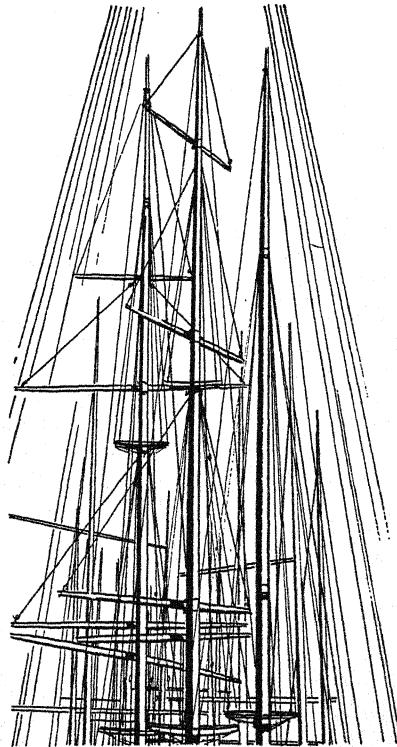
(Have I forgotten any part? any thing in the past?  
 Come to me whoever and whatever, till I give you recognition.)

I respect Assyria, China, Teutonia, and the Hebrews,  
 I adopt each theory, myth, god, and demi-god,  
 I see that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies, are true, without ex-  
     ceptions,  
 I assert that all past days were what they must have been,  
 And that they could no-how have been better than they were,  
 And that to-day is what it must be, and that America is,  
 And that to-day and America could no-how be better than they are.

## 3

In the name of these States and in your and my name, the Past,  
 And in the name of these States and in your and my name, the Present  
     time.

I know that the past was great and the future will be great,  
 And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present time,  
 (For the sake of him I typify, for the common average man's sake,  
     your sake if you are he,) And that where I am or you are this present day, there is the centre  
     of all days, all races,  
 And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of races and  
     days, or ever will come.



## A BROADWAY PAGEANT

### 1

OVER the Western sea hither from Niphon come,  
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,  
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, impassive,  
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

Libertad! I do not know whether others behold what I behold,  
In the procession along with the nobles of Niphon, the errand-bearers,  
Bringing up the rear, hovering above, around, or in the ranks marching,  
But I will sing you a song of what I behold Libertad.

When million-footed Manhattan unspent descends to her pavements,  
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud roar I love,  
When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and smell I love spit  
their salutes.

When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and heaven-clouds  
canopy my city with a delicate thin haze,

When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests at the wharves,  
thicken with colors,

When every ship richly drest carries her flag at the peak,

When pennants trail and street-festoons hang from the windows,

When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers and foot-  
standers, when the mass is densest,

When the façades of the houses are alive with people, when eyes gaze  
riveted tens of thousands at a time,

When the guests from the islands advance, when the pageant moves  
forward visible.

When the summons is made, when the answer that waited thousands  
of years answers,

I too arising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge with the  
crowd, and gaze with them.

2

Superb-faced Manhattan!

Comrade Americanos! to us, then at last the Orient comes.

To us, my city,

Where our tall-topt marble and iron beauties range on opposite sides,  
to walk in the space between,

To-day our Antipodes comes.

The Originatress comes,

The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race of eld,  
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion.

Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,

With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering eyes,

The race of Brahma comes.

See my cantabile! these and more are flashing to us from the proces-  
sion,

As it moves changing, a kaleidoscope divine it moves changing be-  
fore us.

For not the envoys nor the tann'd Japanee from his island only,  
Lithe and silent the Hindoo appears, the Asiatic continent itself ap-  
pears, the past, the dead,  
The murky night-morning of wonder and fable inscrutable,  
The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-bees,  
The north, the sweltering south, eastern Assyria, the Hebrews, the  
ancient of ancients,  
Vast desolated cities, the gliding present, all of these and more are in  
the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it,  
The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia, the coast beyond,  
The coast you henceforth are facing—you Libertad! from your West-  
ern golden shores,  
The countries there with their populations, the millions en-masse are  
curiously here,  
The swarming market-places, the temples with idols ranged along the  
sides or at the end, bonze, brahmin, and lama,  
Mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman,  
The singing-girl and the dancing-girl, the ecstatic persons, the se-  
cluded emperors,  
Confucius himself, the great poets and heroes, the warriors, the castes,  
all,  
Trooping up, crowding from all directions, from the Altay mountains,  
From Thibet, from the four winding and far-flowing rivers of China,  
From the southern peninsulas and the demi-continental islands, from  
Malaysia,  
These and whatever belongs to them palpable show forth to me, and  
are seiz'd by me,  
And I am seiz'd by them, and friendlily held by them,  
Till as here them all I chant, Libertad! for themselves and for you.

For I too raising my voice join the ranks of this pageant,  
I am the chanter, I chant aloud over the pageant,  
I chant the world on my Western sea,  
I chant copious the islands beyond, thick as stars in the sky,  
I chant the new empire grander than any before, as in a vision it comes  
to me,  
I chant America the mistress, I chant a greater supremacy,  
I chant projected a thousand blooming cities yet in time on those  
groups of sea-islands,

My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archipelagoes,  
My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,  
Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its work, races re-born, refresh'd,  
Lives, works resumed—the object I know not—but the old, the Asiatic  
renew'd as it must be,  
Commencing from this day surrounded by the world.

## 3

And you Libertad of the world!  
You shall sit in the middle well-pois'd thousands and thousands of years,  
As to-day from one side the nobles of Asia come to you,  
As to-morrow from the other side the queen of England sends her eldest son to you.

The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed,  
The ring is circled, the journey is done,  
The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd, nevertheless the perfume pours copiously out of the whole box.

Young Libertad! with the venerable Asia, the all-mother,  
Be considerate with her now and ever hot Libertad, for you are all,  
Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother now sending messages over the archipelagoes to you,  
Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

Were the children straying westward so long? so wide the tramping?  
Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward from Paradise so long?  
Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all the while unknown, for you, for reasons?

They are justified, they are accomplish'd, they shall now be turn'd the other way also, to travel toward you thence,  
They shall now also march obediently eastward for your sake Libertad.



## SEA-DRIFT

### OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,  
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,  
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond where the child leaving his  
    bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,  
Down from the shower'd halo,  
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they  
    were alive,  
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,  
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,  
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and fallings I  
    heard,  
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if with  
    tears,  
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,  
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,  
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,  
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,

From such as now they start the scene revisiting,  
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,  
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,  
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,  
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,  
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,  
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,  
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,  
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing,  
Up this seashore in some briars,  
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,  
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,  
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,  
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with bright  
eyes,  
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them,  
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

*Shine! shine! shine!  
Pour down your warmth, great sun!  
While we bask, we two together.*

*Two together!  
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,  
Day come white, or night come black,  
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,  
Singing all time, minding no time,  
While we two keep together.*

Till of a sudden,  
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,  
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,  
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,  
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,  
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,  
Over the hoarse surging of the sea.

Or flitting from brier to brier by day,  
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,  
The solitary guest from Alabama.

*Blow! blow! blow!*  
*Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;*  
*I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.*

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,  
All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,  
Down almost amid the slapping waves,  
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,  
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

Yes my brother I know,  
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,  
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,  
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,  
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights  
after their sorts,  
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,  
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,  
Listen'd long and long.

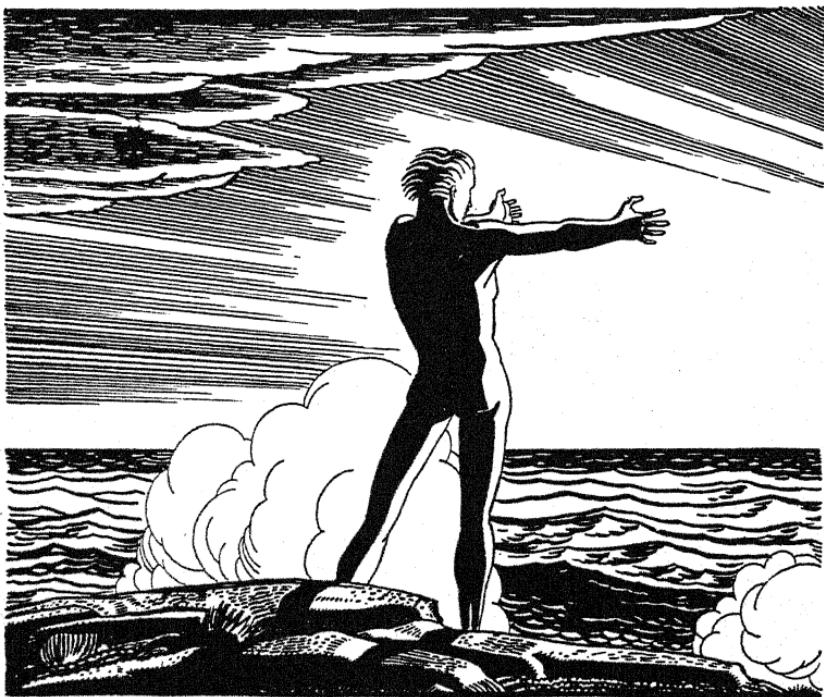
Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,  
Following you my brother.

*Soothe! soothe! soothe!*  
*Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,*  
*And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,*  
*But my love soothes not me, not me.*

*Low hangs the moon, it rose late,*  
*It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.*

*O madly the sea pushes upon the land,*  
*With love, with love.*

*O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?*  
*What is that little black thing I see there in the white?*



*Loud! loud! loud!  
Loud I call to you, my love!  
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,  
Surely you must know who is here, is here,  
You must know who I am, my love.*

*Low-hanging moon!  
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?  
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!  
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.*

*Land! land! O land!  
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate back again  
if you only would,  
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.*

*O rising stars!  
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of you.*

*O throat! O trembling throat!  
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!  
Pierce the woods, the earth,  
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.*

*Shake out carols!  
Solitary here, the night's carols!  
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!  
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!  
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea!  
O reckless despairing carols.*

*But soft! sink low!  
Soft, let me just murmur,  
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,  
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,  
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,  
But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately to  
me.*

*Hither my love!  
Here I am! here!  
With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,  
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,  
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,  
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,  
Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness! O in vain!  
O I am very sick and sorrowful.*

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!  
O troubled reflection in the sea!  
O throat! O throbbing heart!  
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

*O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!  
In the air, in the woods, over fields,  
Loved! loved! loved! loved!*

*But my mate no more, no more with me!  
We two together no more.*

The aria sinking,  
All else continuing, the stars shining,  
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,  
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,  
On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,  
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of  
the sea almost touching,  
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmos-  
phere dallying,  
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously  
bursting,  
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,  
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,  
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,  
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,  
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret  
hissing,  
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)  
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?  
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard  
you,  
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,  
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder and  
more sorrowful than yours,  
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to  
die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,  
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you,  
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,  
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,  
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there  
in the night,  
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,  
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,  
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,) O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,) The word final, superior to all, Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen; Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea waves? Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea, Delaying not, hurrying not, Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before daybreak, Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death, And again death, death, death, death, Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart, But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet, Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly all over, Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget, But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother, That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach, With the thousand responsive songs at random, My own songs awaked from that hour, And with them the key, the word up from the waves, The word of the sweetest song and all songs, That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet, (Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside,) The sea whisper'd me.

#### AS I EBB'D WITH THE OCEAN OF LIFE

##### 1

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life, As I wended the shores I know, As I walk'd where the ripples continually wash you Paumanok, Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant, Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her castaways, I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,

Held by this electric self out of the pride of which I utter poems,  
Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,  
The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and all the land  
of the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to follow those  
slender windrows,  
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,  
Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left by the tide,  
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side of me,  
Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought of likenesses,  
These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types.

## 2

As I wend to the shores I know not,  
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,  
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,  
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,  
I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,  
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,  
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,  
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,  
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon me I have  
not once had the least idea who or what I am,  
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet un-  
touch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd.  
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs and  
bows,  
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have written,  
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand beneath.  
I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a single object,  
and that no man ever can,  
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to dart upon  
me and sting me,  
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

## 3

You oceans both, I close with you,  
We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift, knowing not  
    why,  
These little shreds indeed standing for you and me and all.

You friable shore with trails of debris,  
You fish-shaped island, I take what is underfoot,  
What is yours is mine my father.

I too Paumanok,  
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and been wash'd  
    on your shores,  
I too am but a trail of drift and debris,  
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island.

I throw myself upon your breast my father,  
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,  
I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me my father,  
Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,  
Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the murmuring I  
    envy.

## 4

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)  
Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,  
Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny not me,  
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I touch you or  
    gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,  
I gather for myself and for this phantom looking down where we lead,  
    and following me and mine.

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,  
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,  
(See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,  
See, the prismatic colors glistening and rolling,)

Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,  
 Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another,  
 From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,  
 Musing pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid or soil,  
 Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and thrown,  
 A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves floating, drifted  
     at random,  
 Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,  
 Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-trumpets,  
 We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence, spread out before  
     you,  
 You up there walking or sitting,  
 Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.

## TEARS

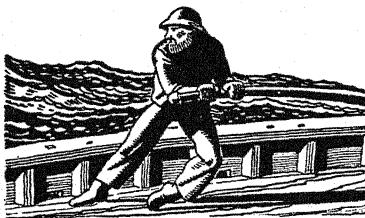
TEARS! tears! tears!  
 In the night, in solitude, tears,  
 On the white shore dripping, dripping, suck'd in by the sand,  
 Tears, not a star shining, all dark and desolate,  
 Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head;  
 O who is that ghost? that form in the dark, with tears?  
 What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouch'd there on the sand?  
 Streaming tears, sobbing tears, throes, choked with wild cries;  
 O storm, embodied, rising, careering with swift steps along the beach!  
 O wild and dismal night storm, with wind—O belching and desperate!  
 O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm countenance and  
     regulated pace,  
 But away at night as you fly, none looking—O then the unloosen'd  
     ocean,  
 Of tears! tears! tears!

## TO THE MAN-OF-WAR-BIRD

THOU who hast slept all night upon the storm,  
 Waking renew'd on thy prodigious pinions,  
 (Burst the wild storm? above it thou ascended'st,  
 And rested on the sky, thy slave that cradled thee,)  
 Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating,  
 As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,  
 (Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating vast.)

Far, far at sea,  
 After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the shore with wrecks,  
 With re-appearing day as now so happy and serene,  
 The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,  
 The limpid spread of air cerulean,  
 Thou also re-appearest.

Thou born to match the gale, (thou art all wings,)  
 To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurricane,  
 Thou ship of air that never furl'st thy sails,  
 Days, even weeks untired and onward, through spaces, realms gyrat-  
 ing,  
 At dusk that look'st on Senegal, at morn America,  
 That sport'st amid the lightning-flash and thunder-cloud,  
 In them, in thy experiences, had'st thou my soul,  
 What joys! what joys were thine!



#### ABOARD AT A SHIP'S HELM

ABOARD at a ship's helm,  
 A young steersman steering with care.

Through fog on a sea-coast dolefully ringing,  
 An ocean-bell—O a warning bell, rock'd by the waves.

O you give good notice indeed, you bell by the sea-reefs ringing,  
 Ringing, ringing, to warn the ship from its wreck-place.

For as on the alert O steersman, you mind the loud admonition,  
 The bows turn, the freighted ship tacking speeds away under her gray  
 sails,

The beautiful and noble ship with all her precious wealth speeds away gayly and safe.

But O the ship, the immortal ship! O ship aboard the ship!  
Ship of the body, ship of the soul, voyaging, voyaging, voyaging.

#### ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT

ON the beach at night,  
Stands a child with her father,  
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

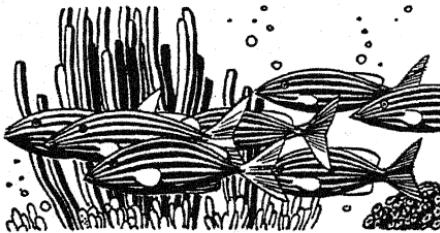
Up through the darkness,  
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses spreading,  
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,  
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,  
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,  
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,  
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,  
Those burial clouds that lower victorious soon to devour all,  
Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not, child,  
Weep not, my darling,  
With these kisses let me remove your tears,  
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious;  
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars only in apparition,  
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another night, the Pleiades shall emerge,  
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden shall shine out again,  
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again, they endure,  
The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive moons shall again shine.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter?  
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,  
 (With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,  
 I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and indirection,) Something there is more immortal even than the stars,  
 (Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing away,) Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous Jupiter,  
 Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,  
 Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.



### THE WORLD BELOW THE BRINE

THE world below the brine,  
 Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,  
 Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds, the thick tangle,  
 openings, and pink turf,  
 Different colors, pale gray and green, purple, white, and gold, the  
 play of light through the water,  
 Dumb swimmers there among the rocks, coral, gluten, grass, rushes,  
 and the aliment of the swimmers,  
 Sluggish existences grazing there suspended, or slowly crawling close  
 to the bottom,  
 The sperm-whale at the surface blowing air and spray, or disporting  
 with his flukes,  
 The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy sea-leopard,  
 and the sting-ray,  
 Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those ocean-depths,  
 breathing that thick-breathing air, as so many do,  
 The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air breathed by  
 beings like us who walk this sphere,  
 The change onward from ours to that of beings who walk other spheres.

## ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT ALONE

ON the beach at night alone,  
 As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,  
 As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef of the  
 universes and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,  
 All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,  
 All distances of place however wide,  
 All distances of time, all inanimate forms,  
 All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in dif-  
 ferent worlds,  
 All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the  
 brutes,  
 All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,  
 All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe,  
 All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,  
 This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,  
 And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.



## SONG FOR ALL SEAS, ALL SHIPS

1

TO-DAY a rude brief recitative,  
 Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag or ship-signal,  
 Of unnamed heroes in the ships—of waves spreading and spreading  
 far as the eye can reach,  
 Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,  
 And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations.  
 Fitful, like a surge.

Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of all intrepid sailors.  
Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never surprise nor  
death dismay,

Pick'd sparingly without noise by thee old ocean, chosen by thee,  
Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time, and unitest nations,  
Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,  
Indomitable, untamed as thee.

(Ever the heroes on water or on land, by ones or twos appearing,  
Ever the stock preserv'd and never lost, though rare. enough for seed  
preserv'd.)

## 2

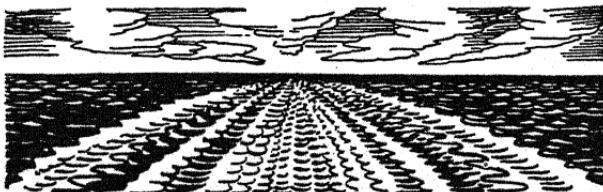
Flaunt out O sea your separate flags of nations!  
Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-signals!  
But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the soul of man one  
flag above all the rest,  
A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man elate above  
death,  
Token of all brave captains and all intrepid sailors and mates,  
And all that went down doing their duty,  
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains young or old.  
A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er all brave sailors,  
All seas, all ships.

## PATROLLING BARNEGAT

WILD, wild the storm, and the sea high running,  
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant undertone muttering,  
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully piercing and pealing.  
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing.  
Out in the shadows there milk-white combs careering.  
On beachy slush and sand spirts of snow fierce-slanting.  
Where through the murk the easterly death-wind breasting.  
Through cutting swirl and spray watchful and firm advancing.  
(That in the distance! is that a wreck? is the red signal flaring?)  
Slush and sand of the beach tireless till daylight wending,  
Steadily, slowly, through hoarse roar never remitting,  
Along the midnight edge by those milk-white combs careering,  
A group of dim, weird forms, struggling, the night confronting.  
That savage trinity warily watching.

## AFTER THE SEA-SHIP

AFTER the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,  
After the white-gray sails taut to their spars and ropes,  
Below, a myriad myriad waves hastening, lifting up their necks,  
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship,  
Waves of the ocean bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,  
Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven, emulous waves,  
Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant, with curves,  
Where the great vessel sailing and tacking displaced the surface,  
Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the ocean yearnfully flowing,  
The wake of the sea-ship after she passes, flashing and frolicsome  
under the sun,  
A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and many fragments,  
Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake following.



## BY THE ROADSIDE

### A BOSTON BALLAD

(1854)

To get betimes in Boston town I rose this morning early,  
Here's a good place at the corner, I must stand and see the show.

Clear the way there Jonathan!  
Way for the President's marshal—way for the government cannon!  
Way for the Federal foot and dragoons, (and the apparitions copiously tumbling.)

I love to look on the Stars and Stripes, I hope the fifes will play Yankee Doodle.

How bright shine the cutlasses of the foremost troops!  
Every man holds his revolver, marching stiff through Boston town.

A fog follows, antiques of the same come limping,  
Some appear wooden-legged, and some appear bandaged and bloodless.

Why this is indeed a show—it has called the dead out of the earth!  
The old graveyards of the hills have hurried to see!  
Phantoms! phantoms countless by flank and rear!  
Cock'd hats of mothy mould—crutches made of mist!  
Arms in slings—old men leaning on young men's shoulders.

What troubles you Yankee phantoms? what is all this chattering of  
bare gums?

Does the ague convulse your limbs? do you mistake your crutches for  
firelocks and level them?

If you blind your eyes with tears you will not see the President's mar-  
shal,

If you groan such groans you might balk the government cannon.

For shame old maniacs—bring down those toss'd arms, and let your  
white hair be,

Here gape your great-grandsons, their wives gaze at them from the  
windows,

See how well dress'd, see how orderly they conduct themselves.

Worse and worse—can't you stand it? are you retreating?  
Is this hour with the living too dead for you?

Retreat then—pell-mell!

To your graves—back—back to the hills old limpers!  
I do not think you belong here anyhow.

But there is one thing that belongs here—shall I tell you what it is,  
gentlemen of Boston?

I will whisper it to the Mayor, he shall send a committee to England,  
They shall get a grant from the Parliament, go with a cart to the royal  
vault.

Dig out King George's coffin, unwrap him quick from the grave-  
clothes, box up his bones for a journey,  
Find a swift Yankee clipper—here is freight for you, black-bellied  
clipper,  
Up with your anchor—shake out your sails—steer straight toward  
Boston bay.

Now call for the President's marshal again, bring out the government  
cannon,

Fetch home the roarers from Congress, make another procession,  
guard it with foot and dragoons.

This centre-piece for them;

Look, all orderly citizens—look from the windows, women!

The committee open the box, set up the regal ribs, glue those that will  
not stay,

Clap the skull on top of the ribs, and clap a crown on top of the skull.

You have got your revenge, old buster—the crown is come to its own,  
and more than its own.

Stick your hands in your pockets, Jonathan—you are a made man  
from this day,

You are mighty cute—and here is one of your bargains.

## EUROPE

### *The 72d and 73d Years of These States*

SUDDENLY out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves,  
Like lightning it le'pt forth half startled at itself,  
Its feet upon the ashes and the rags, its hand tight to the throats of  
kings.

O hope and faith!

O aching close of exiled patriots' lives!

O many a sicken'd heart!

Turn back unto this day and make yourselves afresh.

And you, paid to defile the People—you liars, mark!

Not for numberless agonies, murders, lusts,

For court thieving in its manifold mean forms, worming from his sim-  
plicity the poor man's wages,

For many a promise sworn by royal lips and broken and laugh'd at  
in the breaking,

Then in their power not for all these did the blows strike revenge, or  
the heads of the nobles fall;

The People scorn'd the ferocity of kings.

But the sweetness of mercy brew'd bitter destruction, and the frightened monarchs come back,  
Each comes in state with his train, hangman, priest, tax-gatherer, Soldier, lawyer, lord, jailer, and sycophant.

Yet behind all lowering stealing, lo, a shape, Vague as the night, draped interminably, head, front and form, in scarlet folds, Whose face and eyes none may see. Out of its robes only this, the red robes lifted by the arm, One finger crook'd pointed high over the top, like the head of a snake appears.

Meanwhile corpses lie in new-made graves, bloody corpses of young men, The rope of the gibbet hangs heavily, the bullets of princes are flying, the creatures of power laugh aloud, And all these things bear fruits, and they are good.

Those corpses of young men, Those martyrs that hang from the gibbets, those hearts pierc'd by the gray lead, Cold and motionless as they seem live elsewhere with unslaughter'd vitality.

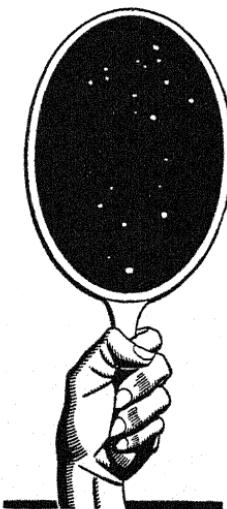
They live in other young men O kings! They live in brothers again ready to defy you. They were purified by death, they were taught and exalted.

Not a grave of the murder'd for freedom but grows seed for freedom, in its turn to bear seed, Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and the snows nourish.

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let loose, But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering, counseling, cautioning.

Liberty, let others despair of you—I never despair of you.

Is the house shut? is the master away? Nevertheless, be ready, be not weary of watching, He will soon return, his messengers come anon.



## A HAND-MIRROR

HOLD it up sternly—see this it sends back, (who is it? is it you?)  
 Outside fair costume, within ashes and filth,  
 No more a flashing eye, no more sonorous voice or springy step,  
 Now some slave's eye, voice, hands, step,  
 A drunkard's breath, unwholesome eater's face, venerealee's flesh,  
 Lungs rotting away piecemeal, stomach sour and cankerous,  
 Joints rheumatic, bowels clogged with abomination,  
 Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams,  
 Words babble, hearing and touch callous,  
 No brain, no heart left, no magnetism of sex;  
 Such from one look in this looking-glass ere you go hence,  
 Such a result so soon—and from such a beginning!

## GODS

LOVER divine and perfect Comrade,  
 Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,  
 Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,  
 Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,  
 Complete in body and dilate in spirit,  
 Be thou my God.

O Death, (for Life has served its turn,)  
 Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion.  
 Be thou my God.

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or know,  
 (To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O soul,)  
 Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,  
 All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,  
 Be ye my Gods.

Or Time and Space,  
 Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,  
 Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,  
 Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,  
 Be ye my Gods.

### GERMS

FORMS, qualities, lives, humanity, language, thoughts,  
 The ones known, and the ones unknown, the ones on the stars,  
 The stars themselves, some shaped, others unshaped,  
 Wonders as of those countries, the soil, trees, cities, inhabitants, what-  
     ever they may be,  
 Splendid suns, the moons and rings, the countless combinations and  
     effects,  
 Such-like, and as good as such-like, visible here or anywhere, stand  
     provided for in a handful of space, which I extend my arm and  
     half enclose with my hand,  
 That containing the start of each and all, the virtue, the germs of all.

### THOUGHTS

Of ownership—as if one fit to own things could not at pleasure enter  
     upon all, and incorporate them into himself or herself;  
 Of vista—suppose some sight in arriere through the formative chaos,  
     presuming the growth, fulness, life, now attain'd on the journey,  
 (But I see the road continued, and the journey ever continued;)  
 Of what was once lacking on earth, and in due time has become sup-  
     plied—and of what will yet be supplied,  
 Because all I see and know I believe to have its main purport in what  
     will yet be supplied.

## WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,  
 When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and meas-  
 ure them,  
 When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much ap-  
 plause in the lecture-room,  
 How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
 Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
 In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
 Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

## PERFECTIONS

ONLY themselves understand themselves and the like of themselves,  
 As souls only understand souls.



## O ME! O LIFE!

O ME! O life! of the questions of these recurring,  
 Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd with the foolish,  
 Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I,  
 and who more faithless?)  
 Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects mean, of the struggle  
 ever renew'd,  
 Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and sordid crowds I see  
 around me,  
 Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the rest me inter-  
 twined,  
 The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these, O me,  
 O life?

*Answer*

That you are here—that life exists and identity,  
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

## TO A PRESIDENT

ALL you are doing and saying is to America dangled mirages,  
You have not learn'd of Nature—of the politics of Nature you have  
    not learn'd the great amplitude, rectitude, impartiality,  
You have not seen that only such as they are for these States,  
And that what is less than they must sooner or later lift off from these  
    States.

## I SIT AND LOOK OUT

I SIT and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all  
    oppression and shame,  
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish with them-  
    selves, remorseful after deeds done,  
I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying, neglected,  
    gaunt, desperate,  
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacherous seducer  
    of young women,  
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love attempted to be  
    hid, I see these sights on the earth,  
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see martyrs and  
    prisoners.  
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots who shall  
    be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,  
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons upon  
    laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;  
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting look out  
    upon,  
See, hear, and am silent.

## TO RICH GIVERS

WHAT you give me I cheerfully accept,  
A little sustenance, a hut and garden, a little money, as I rendezvous  
    with my poems,  
A traveler's lodging and breakfast as I journey through the States,—  
    why should I be ashamed to own such gifts? why to advertise for  
    them?

For I myself am not one who bestows nothing upon man and woman,  
 For I bestow upon any man or woman the entrance to all the gifts of  
 the universe.

### THE DALLIANCE OF THE EAGLES

SKIRTING the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest,) Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the eagles, The rushing amorous contact high in space together, The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating wheel, Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling, In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward falling, Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's lull, A motionless still balance in the air, then parting, talons loosing, Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their separate diverse flight, She hers, he his, pursuing.

### ROAMING IN THOUGHT

*(After reading HEGEL)*

ROAMING in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that is Good steadily hastening towards immortality, And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to merge itself and become lost and dead.

### A FARM PICTURE

THROUGH the ample open door of the peaceful country barn, A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding, And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away.

### A CHILD'S AMAZE

SILENT and amazed even when a little boy, I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God in his statements, As contending against some being or influence.

### THE RUNNER

ON a flat road runs the well-train'd runner, He is lean and sinewy with muscular legs,

He is thinly clothed, he leans forward as he runs,  
With lightly closed fists and arms partially rais'd.

### BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

WOMEN sit or move to and fro, some old, some young,  
The young are beautiful—but the old are more beautiful than the  
young.



### MOTHER AND BABE

I SEE the sleeping babe nestling the breast of its mother,  
The sleeping mother and babe—hush'd, I study them long and long.

### THOUGHT

OF obedience, faith, adhesiveness;  
As I stand aloof and look there is to me something profoundly affecting  
in large masses of men following the lead of those who do not  
believe in men.

### VISOR'D

A MASK, a perpetual natural disguiser of herself,  
Concealing her face, concealing her form,  
Changes and transformations every hour, every moment,  
Falling upon her even when she sleeps.

## THOUGHT

OF Justice—as if Justice could be any thing but the same ample law.  
expounded by natural judges and saviors,  
As if it might be this thing or that thing, according to decisions.

## GLIDING O'ER ALL

GLIDING o'er all, through all,  
Through Nature, Time, and Space,  
As a ship on the waters advancing,  
The voyage of the soul—not life alone,  
Death, many deaths I'll sing.

## HAST NEVER COME TO THEE AN HOUR

HAST never come to thee an hour,  
A sudden gleam divine, precipitating, bursting all these bubbles, fash-  
ions, wealth?  
These eager business aims—books, politics, art, amours,  
To utter nothingness?

## THOUGHT

OF Equality—as if it harm'd me, giving others the same chances and  
rights as myself—as if it were not indispensable to my own rights  
that others possess the same.

## TO OLD AGE

I SEE in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads itself grandly as it  
pours in the great sea.

## LOCATIONS AND TIMES

LOCATIONS and times—what is it in me that meets them all, whenever  
and wherever, and makes me at home?  
Forms, colors, densities, odors—what is it in me that corresponds with  
them?

## OFFERINGS

A THOUSAND perfect men and women appear,  
Around each gathers a cluster of friends, and gay children and youths,  
with offerings.

## TO THE STATES

*To Identify the 16th, 17th, or 18th Presidentiad*

WHY reclining, interrogating? why myself and all drowsing?  
What deepening twilight—scum floating atop of the waters,  
Who are they as bats and night-dogs askant in the capitol?  
What a filthy Presidentiad! (O South, your torrid suns! O North, your  
arctic freezings!)  
Are those really Congressmen? are those the great Judges? is that the  
President?  
Then I will sleep awhile yet, for I see that these States sleep, for rea-  
sons;  
(With gathering murk, with muttering thunder and lambent shoots  
we all duly awake,  
South, North, East, West, inland and seaboard, we will surely awake.)